A Godlie treatisse declaryng the benefites, fruites, and great commodities of prayer, and also the true vse thereof.

By [illegible] Fr[illegible] Bis[illegible] Rochester

Written in Latin, fourtie yeres past, by an Englyshe man, of great vertus & learnyng.

And lately translated into Englyshe.

1560.

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The translatour to the Reader.

Man that lyke vil-
gentlye to conſider &
deeply to weygh the
wonderfull chaunge
whiche vniuerſallye
euery age bryngeth,
and wooꝛketh in all
wooꝛldly thynges, ſhall perceaue that it
ſeemeth in maner not to be the wooꝛlde
that beſoꝛe it was, but rather (in com-
paryſon) the firſte conſummate and en-
ded, a newe ſubſtitute and ſucceedyng
in the place therof: And whither a man
lyke to obſerue the ſame in matters of
great waight, oꝛ els of leſſe impoꝛtaſice,
he ſhall not want cauſe to wonder to ſee
ſuch mutation in all thynges. But were
it ſo, that this chaunge were foꝛ the bet-
ter, than might man iuſtly receaue com-
foꝛt by the conſideration thereof. But
alas it is ſo farre from that, that on the
contrary parte, we maye beholde in ſo
many and ſo often mutations, decay in
euery one, & eche one wooꝛſe then other,

& so the last worst of all the rest. Which thyng right well appeareth, aswell by diuine as prophane writers in euery age, amongste whom the poetes (not without great consideration) esteemed the first to be lyke golde, the next so decayed that it was from golde abased to syluer, the thirde to braſſe, the fourth of lesse price and value, and was become lyke iron, whereupon they all lament the decay of vertue, loue, and feare of God, decay of charitie, decay of true fayth, decay of mutuall loue, decay of fidelitie & good conscience, decay of obedience, decay of humilitie, and finally and chiefly decay of deuotion, prayer, and heauenly contemplation, whiche ought to be the roote out of the which all the rest should growe and flourysshe, as proceedyng frō a perfect loue and reuerent feare of God: For by the decay therof, God is not called vppon for his grace and assistaunce, he is not thanked & prayed for his mercye and great benefites, the rewarde of his mercy is not desired, the horrible punyshement of his iustice is not feared,

whereby we lyue as though we had no nede of God, and as though we hoped for no better, nor mistrusted no worse than we fynd here, as though God were not the rewarder of vertue and punysher of vice, and finally as though there were no God at all, no resurrection, no heauen nor hell. So as in this tyme these olde verses are more than trulye verified here.

Hen viuunt homines tanquam mors nulla sequatur.
Et velut infernus fabula vana foret.

When lyue and yet beleue not
That death wyll ouertake them:
And paynes of hell they feare not
For fables they accompt them.

For if God be, why acknowlege not we his power, maiestie, and omnipotencie, and honour hym thereafter: If God be mercyfull, why craue we not his mercy: If God be iuste, why feare we not his vengeaunce, and begge his pardon: If God be the spouse of the soule of man, why do we not loue hym: why be we not desirous to be conuersant with him, and continually to delight in hym: who

is so farre in loue with the soule of man, that yf man do but faythfully craue his mercy, pardon, grace, fauour, and assistaunce, he doth louyngly graunt the same, yea he doth preoccupate and prepare our hartes to call on hym, yf we frowardly and wylfully put not awaye and refuse to folowe his holy inspiration, so as, of his only mercie, he leaueth no meane to drawe man vnto hym, yf he lyste to applie his owne endeuour: Which yf it folowe not, than doth man turne the vnmeasurable goodnesse of God, so rejected and refused, to the multiplying of his owne synne. And than doth the wonderfull vnkyndenesse and toto much vnthankefulnesse of man, vnspeakablye set forth the mercies of God, who wylleth all men to be saued, who restrayneth his grace from no man excepte he harden his owne hart, eyther by presumption, dispayre, or wicked securitie in synne, yea who knocketh and beateth at the dore of our conscience, desireth to enter and dwell with vs, onlye he requireth to be let in, and his habitation

tion prepared for hym: and yet doth he that hymselfe tu. For yf we do but admit hym in, he clenseth the house of our soule, yea he hath alredy washed and made cleane the same with the blond of his deare sonne, so as we vse the due meanes to applie the same vnto vs. But the more God seeketh vs, the more we shunne him, the more he desireth vs the lesse we care for hym, the more he neede hym, the lesse we thynke of hym. So as he is by our ouergreat vnkyndenesse and wylfulnesse, much more nowe wearyed, than when he complayned by the Prophete Esaye of the Israelites, saying: Laboraui sustinens: I am ouer weeryed with bearyng and long sufferyng your sinnefull lyfe and abhominable doynges. And therefore this decaye must needes be the greatest whereseuer it happen, as by the want whereof, all the rest consequentlye do folowe of necessitie, and losse of that whiche onelye is to be desyred in this lyfe, whiche is the heauenlye comfort of his diuine inspiration, growyng to manne by the often Esay. i. 14.

often consideration of the benefites of Christ, incarnate, crucified, and ryssen agayne: and not only that, but also the consummation of that ioye and felicitie in heauen neuer to ende. Howe soze this greateste vertue is decayed, and what cause we haue iustly to lament thesame, it may wel appeare by this litle treatisse written in Latin by an Englyshe man, a Bishop of great learning and maruelous vertue of lyse, suche one as seemed perfectly to taste and sauour how sweete and pleasaunt the spirite of GOD is: Who in his woꝛke so pꝛofoundely doth penetrate the comfoꝛt, ioy, and consolation commyng by true pꝛayer, that any man readyng the same with diligence, may easily perceaue what he loseth that frequenteth not pꝛayer: And so farre instructeth all men, not only to pꝛay, but also so to pꝛay that they lose not the fruit therof, shewyng both howe pꝛayer best pleaseth God, and how it most pꝛofiteth our selues. And in that his tyme, moze than fourtie yeres past, lamented, mooned, yea cryed out vppon the decaye of

pꝛayer

prayer & contemplation, and the want of the true vse therof in all degrees, and the lousse lyfe of men, and vntowardnesse to praye, whiche be so frayle, so weake, so peruerse of nature, so beset with daylye enemies, so prone to the worst, that they ought asmuch as might be, continually to praye, continually to arme them selfe with strength and constancie of the grace of God, to fight with theyr enemies, synne, the deuyll, the worlde, and the fleshe, weepeth vppon the euyll examples of Byshoppes, Priestes, and Cleargie, who shoulde moue other by the perfection of theyr life, wayleth the hardnesse of our hartes, that beyng well taught, lyste not to folowe the same, complayneth that the world prayeth not, no, nor knoweth what prayer is, nor howe to pray, sheweth how prayer is abolyshed, and the fruite thereof lost, yea by them that do praye, for that eyther their prayer is not pure, and pleasyng God, or els theyr lyfe and workes disagreeing and contrary. But what go I in hande to seeme to expresse the perti-

eularities of that, which he so lyuely, so perfectly, so playnely, and so religiously sheweth and declareth, yea rather the spirite of God, vsyng his pen to publishe his holy wyll, to instructe vs. Only this I haue to saye, that seeyng the same in written hande, as it were, neglected as a thyng of small price, beyng in deede such a worke as the lyke (I beleue) hath not often ben written in that matter, I could not satisfie my selfe to see suche a pearle hydden, and such a iewell throwen and cast awaye to oblyuion, consideryng first the benefite that maye, and I truste shall, growe to the attentiue readers therof, and secondly remembryng howe much more neede there is of so holye an instruction and heauenly inuitation to prayer and deuotion at this tyme, than when the same was written. Synce which tyme, hath passed almoste one age of mans lyfe, and in this whyle, decaye styll as before, of pitie and vertue, and want of the feare of God, and euyll lyfe wonderfullye increased, as in the which the euyll neighbour of mankynde hath

hath stollen vppon hym, and fyndyng hym negligent, hath sowen cockle and manche euyll seede in the fielde of our soules, and hath in maner pulled vp the rootes of good workes, and the holsome and plentifull fruites of repentaunce, fayth, hope, charitie, almes, and true trust in God. For who in maner, sheweth in lyuyng to feare God? Who is afrayde to offende hym? Who refrayneth to blaspheme his holy name? Who hath conscience to deceaue, yea or to oppresse his neighbour? Who is ashamed to lye, and forsweare hym selfe? Who hath compassion to relieue the poore, which this plague of God, and want of his grace, hath increased out of number? Who taketh any payne to please God? Who seketh to subdue his flesshe to the spirite, sensualitie to reason, reason to fayth, and fayth to the seruice of GOD? Yea who layeth not the bridell of libertie at length freely and without staye to folowe synne, and to multiplie the wrath of GOD? Who haunteth prayer? Yea who shun-

Math. 13. 19.

neth

neth and contemneth it not? Who preferreth the house of prayer, before a dysyng house? Yea, fynde we not mo in thone than in thother? Subiectes rebell agaynst theyr Prince and God his annoynted, chyldren disobey theyr parentes, contemne them, and laugh them to scorne, seruauntes litle esteeme theyr maisters, labourers seeke, and greedyly folow ydlenesse, artificers vntrueth, and too extreme falsehood in theyr workes. All sortes of men lust after theyr ease, excesse, and vnrulye libertie, no man seketh to mortifie hym selfe, to ouercome his owne frowarde wyll. And the cause of all this, is this wonderfull decaye of prayer, by the vse wherof, we myght at the last delyght in the familiaritie with God, and godlye thynges, berauyshed with the loue therof, and so consequentlye growe to the mislykyng and hate of synne, whiche is onlye wrought by the loue of vertue, whiche is only obteyned by true and effectuall prayer, which dryueth away the hauntyng of those enormities aforesayde, whiche prouoke the

wrath

wrath of God vppon the worlde. And who can thynke that God wyll longe suffer this alienation of our selues from hym: Yea this contempte of hym, this blasphemie agaynst his holye wyll, and name: Who ought not hourely to loke for his visitation, and heauy hande of iustice: Who may not ryghtly saye to the worlde nowe, lyke as Jonas the Prophet sayde vnto the Niniuites: Ad huc quadraginta dies & mundus subuertetur: There be yet fourtie dayes, & the worlde shalbe destroyed. Whiche saying me thinketh is fully taught to any that shal reade this worke, who sheweth the fault, the cause of the wrath of God, and the meane to remedie the same, and with the Prophete calleth to repentaunce, lyuely fayth, feruent charitie, effectuall prayer to appease his indignation, hate of our selues, and loue of God only, dispysyng the worlde, and longyng to be with hym. Reade therfore this booke, & reade it with iugement, with deliberation, with a deepe consideration thereof, and with a desire and purpose to be reformed,

Jonas 3. 4

formed, make thy hart meete, and prepare it to receaue fruite of this godly instruction, let thy hart iudge of that thine eye seeth, and thy soule reioyce in that thy tongue pronounceth. Reade it in deede, and not superficially ouerloke it: And than surely I can not thynke that he that so doth, can be defrauded of the fruite of his labour, or not obteyne his desired ende therof: Whiche I hartyly wyshe to happen to euery reader hereof, whereby God maye be feared, loued, glorified, and esteemed by them, & they thereby rauished, and inflamed with the ryght vnspeakable loue of hym, sweetenesse of his holy spirite, admiration of his omnipotencie, truste of mercye, and ioyfull expectation of his euerlastynge kyngdome, whiche he hath prepared for all those that walke in his wayes, obserue his lawes, be stedfast in faith, thirst after ryghteousnes, thynke long to be with hym, and by true, and faythfull prayer, seeke to be directed in the pylgrimage of this wyldernesse, by the continuall guydyng of his holye spirite: To

whom

whom be prayse for euer and euer.
Amen.

How expedient & necessary it is to pray. 1

A Treatise vpon these wordes of our Sauiour Christe.

Oportet Semper Orare.

CHAP. I.

FOrasmuche as this saying of our Sauiour Christ, Oportet semper orare, A man muste alwayes praye, written in the Gospell of Saint Luke, appertaineth generally vnto all Christian men: who seeth not howe profitable and necessary it is for euery man, diligently and effectually to apply hym selfe to prayer? And so expedient and beneficiall a thing, in no wise to be neglected, for vayne and hurtfull delectations and pleasures. Wherefore to the ende that our prayer may ware sweete and pleasaunt vnto vs, fyrst of all it shalbe very commodious and profitable, to haue redye at hande and in our remembraunce, certayne reasons, with the whiche as

Luk. xviii. 1

2.

moste apt and conuenient motions (as ofte as we perceyue our selues, to ware colde in deuotion, and be as it were oppressed with a slouthfull vnaptnes to serue God) we may styrre vp our myndes, and whet our hartes to praier. Moreouer it shall meruelously profite and readyngly further vs, not to be ignoraunt of the singuler fruites and commodities, that very many haue obteyned by prayer. For by the knowledge thereof, we shall the more easyly inuite and prepare our selues to pray: And finally it shalbe very nedefull for vs, thoroughly to vnderstand the very true maner whiche is specially required in euery man, to be obserued in the tyme of his prayer. Forasmuch as in euery worke of any difficultie that man taketh in hand, the right way of doyng thereof beyng once knowen, doth very much further the due execution, and perfect finishing of the same. I haue therefore intended by the helpe of God, to intreate in order of these three thinges: That is to say, of the necessitie of prayer, of the fruite of

prayer,

prayer, and of the true vse and maner of prayer. But forasmuch as the wordes of our Sauiour beforesayde, do cast some scruple and doubte into manye mens mindes, it shall not be out of purpose for the better vnderstandyng thereof, yf we do fyrst expound and declare, howe those wordes are moste ryghtly to be vnderstanded. And to begin withall, this sayyng of our Sauiour is moste assuredly true, Oportet semper orare, for prayer is necessary vnto vs euery daye, euery howre, and euery minute. And yet doth not almightie god so seuerely demaunde an accompte thereof of vs, that he byndeth vs to incessaunte prayer with our mouth, whiche thing neuer man hath vnto this tyme, or coulde be able to obserue. But forasmuche as there passeth no moment of tyme, in whiche we haue not great nede of the helpe & assistaunce of almightie God; There are we of necessitie constrayned by continual prayer, humblye with all diligence to require and craue his diuine helpe and succour. For who is he that perceyueth not

The three speciall poyntes, wherein consisteth the sum of this treatise.

The interpretation of Christes wordes, Oportet semper orare.

(so as he geue his mynde diligently to obserue the same) that all we are euen presently to be returned to duste and asshes, whensoeuer God should detayne and withholde his hande of helpe from ouer vs, and that there is no man of power without him, to endure the space of one moment of tyme, as Job sayeth. In eius manu est anima omnis viuentis. In his hande is the life of euery liuing creature. Euery one of vs remayneth in no better estate, then as yf he dyd hange in a basket ouer a great deepe pit, borne vp and sustayned by a corde in the hande of an other man. And in that case doubtlesse, the man so placed, standeth in great nede of the diligent helpe of hym that holdeth the rope, and thereby stayeth hym from fallyng: for yf he once let go the rope, the other that hangeth, muste nedes downe headlong into the bottome of the pitte. And lykewyse must it nedes happen vnto euery one of vs, yf God sustayne vs not incessauntlye with his mightie hande and power. And he it is that so stayeth the rope, that we be not

Job. xii. 10

A similitude aptly applyed.

by

No moment in wch we haue not necessity to pray.

by the greeuousnes of the fal, bruised, and crussed in peeces, and so forthwith consumed to nothyng. I speake nothyng now of many other daungerous perilles, and headlong fallyng places, wherewith we be continuallye inuironed. What is he than so grosse witted, and so blynde in iudgement, that vnderstandeth not, that there is no tyme, nor no one moment of tyme, in the whiche we haue not verye great nede, earnestly to call vpon God, to require his ayde, defence and succour, and in the whiche we haue not cause incessantly to pray? But forasmuch as after this vnderstandyng and sense, there is no man that by actuall prayer (as we call it) doth satisfie and fulfyll the same wordes of our Sauiour, that is to say, euery moment to continue in prayer: Therefore we had nede to searche out some other sense and meanyng thereof. And in deede, this saying of our Sauiour Christ, may rightly be otherwise vnderstanded. As thus. A certayne Monke, one of the olde fathers, beyng demaunded howe he fulfilled that saying or com-

crushed

maundement of Christ, Oportet semper Orare, made this aunswere: When I haue (sayeth he) finished and sayde my dayly prayers, the time that remayneth, I vse to bestowe in labouryng with my handes, as farre forth as the habilitie, and strength of my bodye doth permit, whereby it commeth to passe, that dayly I gayne somwhat, with the whiche I may relieue not onlye my selfe, but also some other poore people. And they (sayeth he) pray for me, as ofte as by the vnquietnes & trouble of my body, I can not pray for my selfe: And by this meane, he dyd beleue that he satisfied the commaundement. And he had the holy scripture agreable with his opinion, whiche sayeth. Absconde Eleemosinam in sinu pauperis, & ipsa pro te orabit. Hyde thy almes in the bosome of the poore, and that shall pray for thee. See than, howe the holy scripture confirmeth that our almes doth pray for vs: and therefore, if a man apply his mynde to shewe mercy and pitie to his neighbours, yt he seeke to defende the Orphans and fatherlesse chyl-

Eccle. xxix v. 12.

chyldren, if he labour to comfort the wydowes whiche be destitute of all consolation, if he be carefull to deliuer those that be oppressed with violence, from iniury and wronge: Finally, yf he shewe hym selfe redy to helpe to his power, any that want succour or relefe, so that besydes all this he neglect not the ordinary appoynted tymes for prayer, by the Church of God, he may well be iudged to haue fulfilled the former wordes of our Sauiour. For that man doth pray alwayes, eyther by him selfe, or els by his almes and charitable dedes, whiche supplieth all the want that appeareth in his owne prayer. In this wyse than, maye the wordes of Christ aforesayde, be understanded, wherin he teacheth vs alwayes to continue in prayer, whiche is as muche to saye, alwayes to lyue and do well, whiche doth sometyme happen to menne, yea when they be slepyng. For as ofte as we do slepe or wake, walke or sit styll, eate or drinke, be dressed or be in quiet, or what els soeuer we do, or suffer, yf all these doynges

be with a true fayth referred to the honour and glory of God, no doubt they appertayne to the increase of a good and perfect lyfe. For if it were not so, Saint Paule woulde not haue wylled the Corinthians, that whatsoeuer they did, they shoulde intende and direct the same, to the glory of God, saying vnto them.

1. Cor. 10. v. 31. Siue editis, siue bibitis, siue quid aliud facitis, omnia in gloriam dei facite. Whether ye eate, or drinke, or what thyng els soeuer ye do, do al to the honour of God. And surely, yf God be moued with our wordes and speaking, to be gracious vnto vs, he wylbe muche more stirred to the same, by our good workes and well doyng, forasmuche as workes do now supplye the place of wordes. And therefore the fauour of GOD is turned towardes vs by our good workes, whiche we do to this ende, and of purpose to please his diuine Maiestie: For they do expresse the vehemencie of prayer, and that much more mightely then the prayers them selfe. Therefore, whosoeuer referreth all that he doth or suffereth,

onlye

Hee wch directs his doeings to Gods glory prayes continuallye

onlye to the glory of GOD, he surely prayeth continuallye, and doth at all tymes, satisfie this aforesayde precept of Christ. For we may iustly say, that he doth continue alwayes in prayer, which alwayes directeth his workes and doynges, to the honour and glory of God. But albeit this saying, Oportet semper Orare, maye be vnderstanded in this sense: Yet notwithstandyng, because Chryst hath of purpose appoynted a difference betwene praying and workyng, and declareth a great diuersitie, betwene almes, prayer, and fastyng: Therefore we shall nowe adde vnto these two, a thirde vnderstandyng of the same. Sainct Paule doth admonishe the people of Thessalonica, that they shoulde pray incessauntly, saying: Sine intermissione orate. And in many places of his Epistles, he declareth that he dyd without ceassyng, remember dyuers in his prayers. Moreouer in the Actes of the Apostles it is wrytten, that whylst Peter was deteyned prysoner and in captiuitie, the Churche of GOD made conti-

i. Thess. Cap. v. 17.

Act. xii. 3.

continuall prayer, and intercession by him. By the whiche wordes it is manyfest and apparaunt, that euery true Christian man, doth pray in euery action and worke he doth, yea although he slepe. The whiche thing can not be true in any wyse, except we do by prayer vnderstande the continuall desyre of the hart, whiche is alwayes strong, and hath his continuall motion in mans mynde. For like as a man beyng bounde in prysson with wayghtie fetters of yron, is compelled by the tedious werynesse of those miseries and afflictions whiche he indureth, vehemently to desyre, and earnestly seeke for libertie. And yf he haue once conceyued any maner of hope of his deliuerraunce, he than incessauntly longeth, wissheth, and desireth to be loosed from those paynefull bandes. Wherfore, euen so euery Christian man (which is not ignoraunt, howe grieuously and fearcely he is inuaded and dayly assaulted by the flesche, the worlde, and the Deuyll, and howe diuers and manyfold miseries and calamities he sustayneth in this

this vale of wretchednes, to how many, and therewith howe great perylles and dayly daungers his lyfe is subiected and sette forth) is inforced euery moment to desyre the ayde and helpe of GOD his grace, by the whiche, at the laste he beyng delyuered from those calamities and great euylles, maye ascende into the beautifull sight, and beholdyng of GOD hym selfe, and the moste happy fruition of euerlastyng felicitie. And this earnest desyre is in the scripture oftentymes vnderstanded for a loude crye in the eares of Almightie GOD, as where the Prophete sayeth: Desiderium pauperum, exaudiuit dominus. GOD hath harde the vehement desyre of the poore. For doubtlesse, the earnest desyre of those that be vexed, and punished in minde and soule, doth spedyly breake in, and maketh a redye waye to the presence of God hym selfe, and rayseth a wonderfull outcry, and noyse into his eares: And therefore forasmuch as suche and the lyke desyre, neuer ceaseth in the hartes of good men, but is

Psal. ix. 9.

conti-

continuallye occupyed, and mooued by grace, so that they do alwayes desyre and long for the succoure and ayde of God, his myght, and power, and that whether they slepe, wake, eate, drinke, or whatsoeuer thing els they do, these men may iustly be iudged alwayes to pray, and that without any intermission. For the declaration whereof, Sainct Augustine sayeth thus. Sine intermissione orare, quid aliud est, quam beatam vitam, sine intermissione desiderare. Sēper hanc a domino desideramus & oramus semper. To pray (sayeth he) without ceassyng, what els is it, that incessauntlye to desyre of God, to leade a good and honest lyfe? Let vs alwayes craue and begge this grace of God, and then we do alwayes pray. This farre Sainct Augustine. And without this hartie desyre, it is not any noyse or sounde of wordes, be it neuer so long, that can stirre vp the eares of almightie God. But yt that be feruent (although there be no sounde of any one worde harde) it doth most easylye penetrate, and obtayneth vndelayedlye

Sainct Iustust. in the. Lxxi. Epistle, ad proban. the. ix. Chapter.

lye a through and gracious audience, at the hande of God, as shall moze largely and playnelye be shewed afterwarde. Therefoze whosoeuer shall in this wyse vnderstande the wozde of our Sauioure aforesayde, in my iudgement, shall thinke moste ryghtly. And in another sense, a man can not easely conceyue howe he may, oz is in any wise able continually without ceassyng to pzay: But by the feruencie of this desyze, whiche is neuer quenched in the hartes of good men, pzayer is alwayes and incessauntly made befoze God, and we do continually knocke at the gates of the mercy of God, beggyng of hym his grace and diuine assistaunce. It is therfoze very true whiche Chryste our Sauiour vyd saye, Oportet semper orare, We muste alwayes pzay, and neuer gene ouer. And yet not so that we be bounde alwayes to vtter any certayne pzayer, conceyued and made in any fozme of wozdes: but so that there passe no minute of time, in the whiche we do not desyze the succour of his grace, and the felicitie to come. Luk. xviii. i.

But

But forasmuche as occasion serueth to speake somewhat more of this matter afterwarde, it shalbe good in the meane tyme to shewe forth certayne reasons, by the whiche (yf we applye any diligence) we may quicken our selues, when we ware dull, and rayse vp our myndes to prayer, as oft as we list.

¶ The first Reason.

CHAP. 11.

AND this one thyng ought specially to moue vs to deuotion, forasmuche as our prayer is lyke vnto a certaine corde or chayne of golde, let downe from Heauen, with the which we labour to drawe almightie God vnto vs, when in deede we be therewith drawen by hym. For it is many tymes seene, that yf a man beyng sette on an hygh place, be desyrous to pull vp an other

By Prayer our hartes are lifted vpp to Heauen.

other that standeth farre vnder hym, he throweth strayght downe a rope vnto hym, the whiche he pulleth vp agayne with all his myght, and by that meane at the last, the other is drawen vp. The lyke, and suche a rope or chayne doth holye Saint Denis call prayer, whiche is veryly let downe from Heauen euen vnto vs, and by God him selfe fastened vnto our hartes. Dion. Areopag.

And there is no man that prayeth truely and as he ought to do, but by the inspiration of almightie God, for of our selues, as Saint Paule sayeth, we be not able, so muche as to thynke a good thought, and therefore the goodnes of God sendeth downe his chayne vnto vs, to the ende that continuallye holdyng our hartes fastened vnto the same, at the last we may be lyfted vp to heauen, vnto the presence of our Lorde God. But let vs open this matter in hand yet more at length, when a man shall with diligent examination ponder and weygh, on the one syde, the exceadyng goodnes, pitie, and mercyfulnes of God, on the other

ii. Cor. iii. 5.

weigh

B. 8.

other side, his owne weakenes, great ne
necessitie, and extreme misery, than ca
he not but be compelled continually t
prese, labour, and trauayle, to come t
the presence of the Lorde God, his mos
gracious creatour and his onlye defen
dour: lyke as the kyng and Prophet
Dauid doth say. Quemui vultum tuum,
vultum tuum, domine requiram. I hau
sought to come vnto thy sight, O Lorde,
to thy syght, O Lorde, I wyll continu
ally trauayle to attayne. And when h
perceyueth and beholdeth hym selfe to b
nowe come and admitted to the sight o
God, than vnfoldeth he, and layeth fort
his owne miseries, than resorteth he t
the remembraunce of his former fer
uent desyres, then doth he deuoutely
and with a godly affection, bewayle h
owne state, and then doth he craue with
great compunction of hart, and with
plentie of bytter teares begge of h
mercy, grace, and continuall assistence,
to helpe hym in his great nede and ne
cessitie, not to leaue and forsake hym i
trouble and aduersitie, but to vouchsafe
also

also to graunt hym his helpefull grace, whereby he myght in all thynges please his diuine maiestie. And whilst the soule of this man is thus occupyed, what other thyng is he in hande withall, than to be drawen vp to his Lorde God, by the cheyne and rope of prayer, than to be vnited sweetely and made one with his maker and Sauiour, than to ioyne his wyll and vnderstandyng with that incomprehensible lyght of the maiestie of God? What other I say, than to make hym selfe of one mynde & affection, with his incomparable clemencie & goodnes, & finally to extoll & exalt hymselfe aboue all worldly creatures, to this ende, that at the laste his soule maye be made one with his Lorde God, beyng (as it were) lynked together with that true golden cheyne of prayer. Lo nowe what maner of bonde prayer is. O rope, moze then golden, and cheyne, to be with all mans desyre and affection sought foz and required. O bonde of loue, moste sweete and delectable, who would not wyllyngly offer hymselfe to be tyed and fethered

with this most pleasaunt corde? Will ho would not be harde bounde and fastned in this so ryche and noble a cheyne? Or finally, who woulde not with all the powers of his soule and body, wyshe and desire to repose hym selfe in rest and quiet, betwene the armes of so louyng a Lorde and myghtie kyng? Doubtlesse, this only thought and meditation maye suffise (yf it be diligentlye weyghed, followed, and considered) to quicken, inflame, and sette in fyre the dullest man, and most colde in vertue and deuotion, to frequent this benefite, and to seke the grace of God by prayer, specialliye for that euery man, be he neuer so extreme and wretched a synner, may and ought to hope assuredly, that albeit the maiestie of God is of a supereminent and vnspeakable dignitie, yet is he so gracious, so mercyfull, and so mylde vnto man, that he refuseth not to incline his moste pure and holy eares, vnto our prophane and vncleane prayers, so as we wante not a stedfast mynde to resyste synne and impietie. For God is so redye, so incli-

nable,

nable, and so well disposed to take mercye on vs in that case, and doth so intierlye loue our soules, that albeit he be the supreme mediatour, ruler, and only Lord and gouernour of the whole worlde, and we nothyng but vncleane fylthy dusse, & moste vyle asshes, yet doth he not contemne our poore and meane state, nor shunneth not vs, or fleeth from vs for our former euyls, of the whiche we haue and do truely repent vs, be they neuer so great, but is forthwith attentyfe, and geueth eare to our pitifull lamentation, waylyng, and sorowfull syghyng, is moued with our teares, hath compassion of our miseries, condescendeth to our petitions, yea and also (which much more is) doth preuent our requeste with his grace, insomuch that before we begyn to pray, he moueth & stireth vs vp vnto the same. O inestimable charitie of our lord God, O clemencie incomparable. Our Lorde God is so farre in loue with our soules, that he studieth howe he may most pleasauntly inuite & allure vs, & laboreth by all meanes to driue vs to attende & geue

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our selues ouer to the contemplation & beholdyng of his beautifull lyght and bryghtnesse, to taste the sauour of his wonderfull sweetenesse, to imbrace the aboundaunce of his plentifull liberalitie, and finally, louingly to kysse the vnspeakable pleasures of his glorious face. Alas howe wretched be they that labour not to their power to be drawen in this pullye and come at this call: And howe muche more miserable are those, which being once drawen into that most pleasaunt way, walke not in the same, and folowe not it: But howe farre most wretched of all other, and vnhappye be they, which after all those callynges and drawyng of the grace of God, do wyllyngly drawe backe, refuse the call, striue and rebell agaynst the vnspeakable clemencie of our so gracious and almyghtie Lorde God: Thus much touchyng the first reason.

The principall Goodnes of Man is eternall felicity wch is attained by Prayer, & Good workes.

The seconde Reason.

CHAP: III.

AND nowe lette vs shewe forth an other reason, whiche may eftsones moue and stirre our myndes to prayer. It is apparaunt and well knowen that the principall and chiefe goodnes belongyng to man, is called & esteemed the true perfection of eternall felicitie, the which is appoynted by God vnto man, for his laste ende. But no man can be able to reache and atteyne to this ende, without such ordinarie meanes as God hath appoynted to leade vs vnto the same. And amongste many other meanes, there be two whiche yf a man once perfectlye haue obteyned, he shall not lyghtly want the rest, which be also necessarie for the obteynyng of this beatitude: and those verylye be prayer and good workes. In those two meanes, we reade in the Actes of the Apostles, that

Cornelius the Centurian was moste commonly exercysed, by the which he so pleased God, that albeit he was an ethnycke, and infidell, yet was it sayde vnto hym by the Angell of God: Orationes tue, & eleemosine tue, ascenderunt in memoriam coram deo. Thy prayers and almesdeedes haue ascended into the sight of god, and are remembred of him. Therefore he that wyll exercise himselfe in these two, that is to say, in prayer and good workes, he shall surely neuer want the rest, which be the other guydes to eternall felicitie. For God his wyll is, that we should humiliate and deiect our selues in the sight of his maiestie, vtterly confessyng and acknowledgyng, that of our owne power, and strength it is impossible that we should do well, but that a good lyfe (whiche is continued in the practise of good workes) is to be craued at his hande by continuall prayer. And that by these meanes, we may at the last ascende and come vnto this last appoynted ende for man, which is eternall felicitie with God. And therefore, forasmuch

Acts. x. 4.

as

as without the benefitt commyng of the vse of good workes, no man attayneth to this appoynted last ende for man, and also that the grace of good lyfe can in no wyse be obteined without prayer, I conclude, that yf we mynde not to fall into eternall miserie, we must continuallye frequent this prayer. And nowe let no man object vnto me in this case, the foolyshe, yrkysshe, & beastly argument, and persuasion of the prescience of almightie God, which can not be deceaued, and yet some there be that saieth thus, God foreseeth and assuredly knoweth al that euer shall happen after, before it be eyther thought or done by man: And now vndoubtedly he knoweth that either I shal be saued in ioy & felicitie, or dampned to perpetuall tormentes & misery. But if he knowe I shalbe saued, what neede haue I to praye for that I am alredye assured of, and shall haue it without any maner of praier, euen only by theffect of the prescience of God, whiche can not be deceyued. On the other side, yf he by his foreknowledge perceaue me to be dampned, no prayers in the world are able to profit

me, forasmuch as his prescience can not be disappointed or chaunged. Verily, this croked dilemma, or false subtyle argument, hath seduced very many: but howe very a sophisticall fallax it is, we shall shewe and declare afterward much better, yf we do firste make prefe, howe the same argument is vtterlye voyde, standeth not, nor hath any consequence, in all other thynges whiche daylye do happen and chaunce vnto vs. As for example. He that is vexed with any greevous sickenes, shall he admitte no phisicke to be applyed and ministred vnto hym, saying God knoweth before whether I shall retourne health or dye: If he knowethe firste, than nede I no phisicke, for so without doubte I shall be healed without any maner of medicine, onely forasmuche as the knowledge of GOD can neuer be deceaued. But if he know that I shall perishe, and dye of this sickenes, what good shall my medicine do me, where as that can in no wyse be made voyde and frustrate, whiche he foreseeth. Thou mayst now se by this same very

A notable example agaynste reasonyng of the prescience of God.

very argument, all the art of Phisicke, and benefite thereof destroyed: Let vs proue howe well it wyll stande in an other. The husband man wyll say, I wyl not sowe, tyll, & husbande my grounde, knoweth not GOD whether this fielde shall without my labour bryng foorth plentie of fruite yea or naye: But yf he knowe it shall so do, than needeth it not my trauayle, and paynefull husbanding: yf otherwyse, I shal but labour in vayne. And by this argument, destroye also all maner of husbandry, and tylthe of the earth. The lyke succesle and conclusion shalbe founde in all other comparisons, if they be in the same maner sorted & compared together. And therefore by these it is very apparaunt and manyfest, that the firste supposed reason is of no validitie, but vtterly false and deceytfull: For yf it myght be true, than were it by the same reason neyther needefull, nor wysedome for the sicke to seke phisicke, nor the husbande man to labour, to manure, and tyll his grounde. Wherefore, as the husbande man may not lyke for

for fruite of his fieldes except he tyll and sowe, neyther yet the sicke man atteyne his health except he be content to folow the aduice of his phisition: Euen so can no Christian man atchieue the fruition of perfecte felicitie, vnlesse he fyrste haue the grace of God to lyue well, and therunto can he not at any time come, without the helpe and meane of continuall & faythfull prayer. And like as we do most commonly see for trueth, that those sicke men must needes perysshe that refuse the medicines, councell, & aduice of their phisitions, and that those fieldes be without all doubt barreyne and fruitlesse whiche want manuryng, and good husbanding: Euen so maye we be well assured, that without prayer & good workes, it is not possible for vs to obteyne euerlastyng felicitie. And therefore, albeit that God hath ordeyned that eternal beatitude, as the supreme & last ende to all good men, yet was it not his wyll that man should atteyne vnto the same, but by such iuste meanes as he had appoynted. And therfore, fyrst and principallye, if a man do

not

not first begyn with a good lyfe, let him neuer loke to end with that glory which is to come, and therewith lett no man thynke to obteyne the grace to lyue wel, excepte he do by daylye, and continuall prayer, craue, & begge the same of God. Begyn therefore we must with prayer, from the whiche no doubt wyll folowe good lyfe, by the whiche we shall at the last be brought to the glorious blysse of heauen, euen vnto the present syght and fruition of the omnipotent maiestie of God hym selfe, the want whereof is the moste extreme losse, and miserie, whiche doth moste manifestlye appeare by the vnsatiable desyre of our myndes. For we seke in euery corner a felicitie which may satisfie vs, and fulfyll our desyres, and we foolyshly thynke that it may be gotten eyther of worldely pleasures, of riches, of honours, or at the least, of them all ioyned together, wherby it folowyth, that we neuer make an end in desiring & sekyng for them, yea & for the gettyng of thē groweth the disturbaunce of al good orders, and the confusion of all thynges

thorowe

thereof we the worlde: And yet when we haue them, there is nothyng in them that can, or is able to satisfie our mindes, forasmuche as they be with none other thyng satisfied, saiyng only the supreme felicitie and glory of God. Haue we not than greate cause, by all meanes, and wayes possible, to seeke and trauaile for the beholdyng and fruition of this ioye, and felicitie, whan by the want thereof we fall presently into perpetuall calamitie and miserie? But forasmuche as the only redy, and assured high way to bring vs to that iourneyes ende, is good lyfe, and the only way to good lyfe is prayer, it followeth necessarylye, that all those that are loth, and vnwyllyng to want, and lose that most happy fruition, must wyllyngelye frequent, and applie them selues to this aforesayde pure and continuall prayer. And this may nowe suffyse for the seconde reason.

The thirde Reason.

CHAP. IIII.

FOR a thirde reason, it shall marueylously moue vs, if we do cal to our remembrance that we bee putt in mynde and cõmaunded by the mouth of Christe hym selfe, to be alwayes redye, and wyllyng to pray, in these his wordes Oportet semper orare. For who was better able directly to instruct vs in those thynges that shoulde further our saluation, than God the sonne of almyghtie God the father, in whom the same God the father hath reposed the treasures of his wysedome and knowledge, & whom he sent downe into this worlde, to this ende, to shewe the same whole worlde a ryght waye to heauen? Or who coulde with greater zeale, and more earnest affection, studye to teache vs the same waye, than he that for the vnspeakable loue whiche he dyd beare vnto vs, wyllyngly

lyngly sustteyned the most bytter, shamefull, and horrible death of the crosse: And he dyd not onlye admonyshe vs of the necessitie of continuall prayer, but he dyd also promyse that we shoulde obteyne any thing that by true and earnest prayer we should require, saying: Petite & accipietis, querite & inuenietis, pulsate & aperietur vobis: Aske and ye shall haue, seeke and ye shall synde, knocke & it shalbe opened vnto you. This promyse was made by the mouth of Jesus Christ the sonne of God, who is trueth it selfe, & seduceth no man: Let vs therfore with an assured confidence approch vnto the throne of his great clemencie, where we may both dayly praye for the grace to lyue and do well, and also for a constant vnmoueable perseueraunce in good workes, nothyng doubtyng but he wyll muche more liberally imparte the same vnto vs, than we can be able eyther to require or thynke of. Wherefore forasmuche as he hath taught vs the necessitie of prayer, and that we must alwayes continue in the same, no man ought

Luke. xi. V. 9.

ought to doubte, but that accordyng to his lesson, the same is for vs moste necessary, and expedient. And therefore it is so requisite for vs Christian men that wander amongste the miseries of this worlde, farre from the face of our Lorde God, to obey, folowe, and practise this healthfull, and profitable commaundement of our Sauiour Christ, that whosoeuer determineth with hym selfe, that he wyll not pray, or maketh an obiecte, and let in his owne minde against prayer, synneth damnablye, and to death: yea and he that is ouer negligent to frequent prayer, hauyng often opportunitie, and specially seyng the peryll of his saluation to depende thereon, that negligence may be deadly, albeit negligence in his owne sense and vnderstandyng, is no mortall crime, but lesse or greater accordyng to the qualitie thereof. But yf we woulde somewhat more diligentlye search forth and discusse the perfect meanyng of the aforesaide wordes of Christ, we shoulde playnelye see howe greate the necessitie of prayer is. Doubtlesse,

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the health of euery Christian dependeth principally of God, of whom of necessitie (as hath ben sayde) euery man must require the same. And because this our health may be euery moment in daunger, and that there is no man whiche is not bounde to prouide and take care for his owne health: It followeth necessarylye, that euery moment we haue present neede to pray and call to God. For inasmuch as our health can neyther be obteyned nor continued, at any other hand then by GOD hym selfe, it appeareth what neede we haue continuallye to exalte our eyes to heauen, and alwayes our hartes to God, and that not only for our selues, but also for the health and well doyng of our neyghbours, whiche we are also bounde to doe. For lyke as euery man is bound to succour his neybour when he seeth hym trauayled with pouertie, and miserie, and suche other wantes in his body: Euen so is he much more bounde, when he seeth any perylle losse lyke to fall to his soule, and the imminent & manyfest daunger of the losse

of

of the spirituall health, and comfort therof. But nowe specially there lyeth vpon vs a much greater necessitie of prayer then euer before, seyng the time so full of daungers, the number of sinners so wonderfully increased vppon the earth, and so great an increase of sinne and wickednes, in our age, as hath not heretofore ben seene. For nowe in this wretched tyme and age we liue in, sinnes be reioyced at, as though they were good deedes, and honest workes are esteemed for great sinnes and enormities, nowe is it well done and commendable to sinne, and contrary great sinne and shame to do well. Wo be vnto vs, that be borne, and lyue in this wretched tyme, in the whiche (I speake it not without sorowe and teares) whosoeuer (beyng indued with any zeale towardes the honour of God) shall caste his eyes on those men and women, whiche nowe lyue, and remayne, shall easyly be moued to lamentation and mournyng, beholdyng euery thyng tourned, and turmoyled vpsyde downe. The moste beautifull order of

vertue and honestie, vtterly destroyed and confounded, and the lyuely lyght and example of honest lyuyng, clerely extinquished, banyshed, and put out of memory and all knowledge: And almost none other thyng nowe lefte in the Churche of Christ, but eyther manyfest iniquitie, or counterfeit holynes. For now amongest the ministers of the same Churche, the great lyght of theyr example, in vertuous, and holy liuing, is almost vtterly extinct, who were wont, and in deede ought styll, lyke lyghtes to the worlde, to shine in vertue and godlynes, and should shewe them selues to all men, as spectacles worthy the beholding, and set to the shewe vppon an high hill, and lyke the bright candle set vppon and aboue the bushell, and not hydden, and vnworthy of sight. And now there commeth no light from them, but rather an horrible mistie cloude, or darke ignoraunce, and a pestilent infection therein, with the which innumerable being deadly infected, are dayly drawen to their destruction. O miserable estate of ours, O

time

time most worthy bewayling, into the which most vnfortunately our deare and holy mother the Churche, the spouse of Christ, is fallen, whiche doth nowe so little esteeme the moste precious bloud of her moste louyng spouse, Jesus Christ: yea, and lyke an inchaunted woman, nothyng regardeth nor reputeth of any moment, that moste excellent pryce, wherewith she was so exceedyng louyngly and dearely redeemed. If this consideration dyd sometyme fall into mens hartes, it would, and ought of ryght to compell vs, beyng humbled in mynde, and truely penitent in hart and soule, to knocke, and beate with violent and continuall faithfull prayers, the gates of the mercy of God, not for our selues alone, but to recouer both our owne health, and our neyghbours, whom we maye nowe see standyng in a moste miserable condition and state, brought to extreme necessitie, and beyng nowe in the present perill and almost vnauoydable daunger of the losse of theyr soules, and recouerye thereof is none at all, but onlye

36. by continuall and effectuall prayer, sorowefully and hartely requyryng the present pardon, succour, and comfort of almightie God.

No man that hath neede daily doth not fall into sinne. Therfore continually we ought by Prayer to inuocate God.

¶ The last Reason.

CHAP. V.

FInally the fourth and last reason may be in this wyse deduced: There liueth no man of the substaunce of our commune frayle fleshe, that hath not sinned and is assured he shall sinne agayne. The which beyng true, it shalbe very necessary vnto vs, for either of both these faultes, to inuocate and call vppon our almightie and moste mercyfull Lord God, with continuall prayers, not onlye to forgeue, and pardon our former sinnes and offences passed, but also that by his omnipotent ayde, & almightie assistance, we fall not againe, eyther to the same, or others, by the occasion whereof, we might incurre, and fall into eternall and euer-

1 faultes.

lasting

falling payne and punishment. And first there is no man that knoweth hym selfe to haue sinned, which is assured and certayne, that he hath as yet recouered the fauoure of God, except the same be by some meanes reueled to hym by GOD, of the whiche thyng Salomon wryteth thus, in his booke named Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes. ix. 1. Sunt iusti & sapientes, & opera eorum in manu dei, et tamen nescit homo vtrum amore vel odio dignus sit, sed omnia in futurum reseruantur incerta. There be (sayeth he) both wyse and iust men, and the doynges of them remayne in the handes of God, and yet knoweth no man whether he stande in the grace or indignation of God. But all those iudgementes be reserued in the secrete knowledge of him selfe vnto the ende. And to this ende be all mens deedes reserued to the last iudgement of God, because there can nothyng be hidden, couered, or kepte secrete, neyther shall the least thought be vnknowen vnto that seuere iudge, that euer crept into the soule of man. But albeit no man can be assured by his owne

38

knowledge in this state of lyfe, that he standeth and remayneth in the fauour of God, yet by certayne coniectures, he may assuredly beleue it, specially if he knowe hym selfe free from any deadly sinne, of the whiche he hath not alredy repented hym selfe, and eyther confessed him selfe, or els purposeth assuredlye, to confesse the same to his ghostly father in tyme conuenient: And therewith yf he fynde hym selfe apte, redye, and wyllyng to the doyng of those thynges, wherewith God his honour may be aduaunced, yf he delyght in hearyng of the holy and sacred worde of God, read and preached, yf he seeke to be often present at the diuine seruice, and prayse geuyng to the name of God: And finally, if he intende as far forth as he maye, to abstayne and flee from thence forth, from all contagious corruption of sinne: Verily this man may assuredly beleue that he is, and consisteth in the state of grace, and in the fauour of God. But to knowe this assuredly, no man shalbe able, except he be illuminate with some other speciall lyght

of

of knowledge and reuelation. And therfore for this cause it shalbe necessary for all men to conteyne and kepe themselues within the limits and boundes of some feruent feare, and to continue knockyng at the gates of the mercy of God, by importune prayer, trauaylyng for his grace and fauour. And this feare is taught and perswaded vnto vs, by holye Scripture, where it is written: De propiciatu peccatorum noli esse sine metu. Be not out of feare, and altogether careleste of thy sinnes forgeuen. And surely this feare shall do so muche good to man, that if the sorowe he hath alredy taken for sinne, be not sufficient, nowe the goodnes of God allowyng this feruent feare, accepting the feruent prayer that groweth from the same, it shall plentifully satisfie, and appease the wrath of God, for all our sinnes, and offences against him. But yf we did graunt that there were some man that had assured knowledge of the full and absolute forgeuenes of his sinnes, and that he knewe him selfe, nowe perfectly reconciled to

Eccle. v. Ecclesiasticus. 5. 5.

A man may fall, therefore ought to feare.
A Godly treatise.

40 God, and admitted to his fauoure, yet hath he good cause to feare, least by some euill happe, he do fall from that state, forasmuche as there is no man so established in the grace of God, but it is possible he may fall from the same, for the which cause, Sainct Paule wryteth to the Romaynes, saying: Tu autem fidestas, noli altum sapere, sed time. Be it so that thou be strong in faith, yet be not thou proude and high mynded therefore, but feare, whiche is as muche as yf he had sayde, yf a man perceyue hym selfe by his fast fayth to stande in the fauour of God, let him not therefore presume ouer muche of him selfe, but rather feare, and mistrust his owne frailnes, forasmuch as he may easyly fall from the same perfection of grace and the fauour of God. For in this lyfe no man ought to warrant and assure hym selfe, and lyue thereby out of feare, whiche is also by the same Apostle testified in his Epistle to the Corinthians: Qui se existimat stare, videat ne cadat. He that supposeth him selfe (sayeth he) to stande faste and sure, let hym take

Rom. xi. 20.

i. Cor. x. 12.

good

good heede, and be well ware that he fall not. Wherefore it shalbe necessary for vs to eleuate and lyfte vp both our eyes and handes towardes Heauen, and demaunde of God by incessaunt prayer, that it wouldve please hym to graunt vnto vs, the grace of perseueraunce, to continue in the exercise and obseruation of his wyll and pleasure, least that by the fayntyng and faylyng therin, we myght after fall from that our former happy state of his grace and fauour. For we do reade of many, which lately stode like mightie pillers in the Churche of God, and shyned therein lyke lyghtes appointed to beautifie the same, glistering therin with the wonderfull brightnes of vertue and holynes: But for that they conteyned not them selues within the limittes of reuerent and humble feare, they fell downe headlong into the bottomlesse pitte of all euyll and mischiefe, not onlye to theyr owne harme and shame, but with the hurt and destruction of many others, whiche thyng (were it not for that I shoulde be tedious) I

myght confirme by the testimonies of many, as well holy doctours, as credible Hystoriographers. But to our purpose, by that whiche is alredye sayde, it is playne and apparaunt ynough, that euerye man hath nede to pray continually, as well to obteyne pardon and forgenes of his sinnes past, as to auoyde the perillous daungers of suche euylles, as be imminent towardes him. And nowe (as I suppose) it is sufficient to haue remembred these foure reasons to proue the necessitie of prayer. We wyll therefore accordyng as we tofore haue promysed in the seconde part, somethyng saye of the great fruite and wonderfull commoditie that groweth to man by prayer.

¶ Of

Frequent Prayer bringeth comfort, & neg-
ligence thereof dulnes.

Of the three chiefe and principall fruites of Prayer.

CHAP. VI.

BVT albeit those reasons before mentioned seme very strong, and wel able to moue the mindes of men to prayer, yet are there many slowe, dull, and vnapte to performe this bonde of duetie. The chiefe cause why, is, because they do not tast, nor sauour the pleasauntnes which many vertuous deuout men, many times do feele in prayer. And they wyll saye, that wyllyngly they woulde pray, so as they myght once taste of the sweetenes whiche they here some other do finde in prayer. But these men remember not, that the sweetenes of prayer can not be had where prayer is not, & therfore to be obteyned by frequent vse therof before, & than afterward they may assuredly loke for the pleasant sweetenes which groweth therby. And in dede it is ỹ long vse & dayly continuance of prayer, which bringeth forth this delight aforesaid in ỹ

minde

mynde of man, lyke as long continued walkyng doth breede vnto the bodye, warmth and heate. For lyke as he that goeth a whyle vp and downe, and walketh forwarde and backewarde, here and there, after some motion of his body, at the last feeleth heate: euen so after that a man hath long vsed and acquainted him selfe with prayer, there groweth in his soule a certayne spirituall sweetenes and heauenly delectation, wherewith he is beyonde measure rauished and pleased. But albeit that euery manne that prayeth, attayneth not in his prayer to this pleasauntnes, yet is he not vtterly frustrate and voyde of other fruites and great commodities, whiche he may gether by prayer. (For there be three sortes of fruites principallye growyng vnto man by prayer. And the first is the merite it selfe, whiche God hath promysed to graunt for prayers sake. The seconde is the obtaynyng the thyng whiche we earnestly desyre in our prayer. And the thirde is the feelyng of that wonderfull sweetenes whiche groweth to many

The fruites or commodities of prayer.

1.
2.
3.

men

men in the tyme of theyr prayer: whiche three kindes of fruites be so dyuers, that a man may easyly obtayne the fyrst of them, wantyng both the last. For a man may by prayer, procure fauour and reward at Gods hande, and yet not obtayne the thyng whiche in his prayer he requireth. As Saint Paule confesseth him selfe, to haue prayed thrise vnto god, to take from hym the concupiscence, or rebellion of his flesshe, wherwith he was greuously afflicted, and obtayned not his request therein: And yet it is certayne and sure, that he lost not the rewards and merite of his good and godlye prayer. Agayne, the two fyrst maye both be had, and the thyrde yet not obtayned, as whan we see many whiche make humble request to God for the forgeuenes of theyr sinnes, obteyne both pardon of God, whiche they require, and besydes that, are assured of the rewards at Gods hands (for that God worketh accordyng to his promyse) and for all this, are not alwayes refreshed with the spirituall ioy, and pleasure of theyr soule.

ii. Cor. xii. 8.

For

For the Publicane of whom Christ maketh mention in the Gospel, when he beyng in the Temple praying, required with al humilitie forgeuenes of his sinne and wickednes, saying: Deus propitius esto michi peccatori. God be mercifull vnto me a sinner: obtayned both as well the reward of prayer, as also forgeuenes of his sinne. Descendit enim iustificatus in domum suam. He returned (sayeth the text) iustified into his owne house. But we reade not in any place, that he in that action receyued any spiritually comfort or consolation in his hart or soule. It is therefore apparaunt that those fruites be so dyuers, that they do not at all tymes happen altogether to a man in prayer. But to the ende that it may be more playnely seene and perceyued, of howe great excellencie any one of these is, we wyll speake somewhat of euery one of them apart, and fyrst what is the reward or merite of prayer.

Luk. xviii.

¶ Of

whiche is merite and reward for the same.

THe first fruite of praier, we call merite or reward promised by God, both to and for the same. And yet minde I not that euerie merit should hereby be vnderstanded, but onlye that whiche is recompensed by essentiall reward (as they call it) in heauen. For this thing we be right sure of, that no man be he neuer so greeuous a sinner, can vtterly want all maner of merite of his prayer, but he shalbe rewarded at Gods hande, either in this present world with some temporal benefites, or at the least, his paynes and punishmentes shalbe the lesse greeuous in the world to come: But as for the glory of Heauen, he shall not (as for that) obtayne the least peece or portion thereof: For that reward, belongeth to no man, but vnto hym whose prayer springeth from the roote

of

of perfect charitie, that is to say, he that is alredy by charitie in the grace and fauour of almightie God, whan he prayeth. And therefore whosoeuer desyreth not to be defrauded of this reward, hath first to care and labour diligently that charitie haue fyll roote in his hart and soule, whiche beyng so, than is not onlye his prayer to be iudged meritorious, but also euery other dede he doth, proceeding from the same roots and foundation. And the more it hath of charitie, the greater muste the merite be. As thus: They are moll worthy rewarde at the hande of God, that moll earnestly pray vnto hym for the well doyng of theyr enemyes, and euyll wyllers, forasmuche as that kynde of prayer proceedeth of so high a degree of Christian charitie. And therefore it shall be expedient for hym that lokeyth for any suche rewarde of his prayer, to studye specially not to want perfect charitie, that is to say, to be whan he prayeth in the fauour of god, and state of grace, the whiche thing as great as it is, yet may it be moste easyly of euery

man

man obteyned, be he neuer so greeuous a synner, as Saint Chrisostome doth at large affirme, wrytyng vpon the Gospel of Saint John, saying thus: That man which desireth to be in that state, let him but repent and retourne from synnes, purpose assuredly with himselfe to leade a newe lyfe in folowing of Jesus Christ, and he is euen than of a synner made ryghteous, and hath this charitie so acceptable to God, and consequently (beyng thus iustified) prayeth in the fauour of God and state of grace. Whiche saying of Saint Chrisostome maye well be confirmed by the Prophete Ezechiell, who from the mouth of God hym selfe promiseth, that in what houre soeuer a sinner shall mourne in hart for his sinne and euyll lyfe, all the same wyll God couer with obliuion, and no more remember them to punishe the same. Omnium iniquitatem eius non recordabor. I wyll not (sayth the Prophete in the person of God) remember agayne or take vengeaunce of any of his sinnes. But we may be sure, and must beleue, that synnes are

Ezech. xi.

by none other meanes blotted out and remoued from the syght of God and his remembraunce, but by the gyftes of his grace & perfect charitie. By the meanes of the which, it is wrought, that the sinner whiche is returned and fledde from his sinne, that is to say, which is hartyly and truely penitent for his former euyll lyfe, beyng nowe wholly brought to humble obedience vnto the wyll of Chryst, is truely iudged to be nowe placed in the state of grace and charitie. Wherefore, forasmuche as repentaunce and amendement of our former euyls, and the mutacion and chaunge of our olde lyfe, dependeth partly of our owne wyll, whiche is free to euery man, and partly of the helpe of the grace of God, whiche is denyed to no man, but hym that hath not that good wyll and desire aforesayde, to exacte the same: it shalbe very easy for euery sinner, by those meanes, euen in a moment, to be made of a sinner, iust and ryghteous, so as he effectually wyll and intende the same, and therewith repose a stedfast hope in the

mercy and goodnes of God. And therefore, whosoeuer, intendyng to pray, eftsones renueth and refresheth his fayth in Christ Jesus, and detestyng the filthynesse of his former lyfe, purposeth with hym selfe from thencefoorth to abstayne from synne, and to do all other thynges accordyng to the wyll and commaundement of God and his Churche, he maye undoubtedly be accompted in the state of charitie and the grace of god, and shal not want the fruite of his prayer, that is to say, such merite as shall accordyngly be recompenced and rewarded in euerlastyng felicitie.

Thus muche hytherto haue we sayde of the first fruits of prayer.

Of the obteining the thing required by prayer, which is the seconde fruite thereof.

THe seconde fruite that we haue noted to be in prayer, is the obteynyng of the thyng whiche we require of God and praye for. And whosoeuer desireth and myndeth to enioye this fruite and commoditie of prayer, it shall not be sufficient vnto hym only to possesse this gift of charitie, but he muste also leane harde vppon the pyller of singuler humilitie, so as the mynde of hym that prayeth may thinke hym selfe vnworthy, vppon whom God shoulde bestowe any benefite, or inspire any part of his grace and fauour, and yet neuer ceasse geuyng thankes for the gyftes and graces whiche he hath receaued of God, and yf any thyng be well done, attribute no prayse or commendation therfore vnto hym selfe, but render the whole laude and thankes geuyng to God

The special thinges requyred for the obteynyng of our petitions.

God for all that is well, and the blame and rebuke to hym selfe for all that is euyll. And we maye truely confesse of our selues, that of our selues we neuer brought forth peece of any good worke or deede: But that euery thing that we haue done, as farre forth as it hath proceaded onlye of our selues, is more worthy to be called synne and vnryghteoulnes, than any acte of vertue and godlynes. For we be alwayes (whansoeuer we do well) placed and set in the hande of God, lyke as the hammer is in the hande of the Smyth. And lyke as the Smyth in his worckyng vseth the hammer as a certayne toole or instrument towardes the finishyng of his worke: euen so be we vnto God as instrumentes to worke his wyll, whansoeuer any thyng is well done by vs. For all that euer seemeth to be well done by vs, it is not we of our selues that do the same, but god that worketh it in vs. And therfore as the hammer that worketh the iron to frame, hath no cause to boast and exalt it selfe agaynst the workeman that Rom ix.

vseth it, neyther yet to ascribe vnto it selfe, that by it selfe eyther this key, or this nayle was made and fashioned, but only by the Smyth, vsyng the hammer as his toole and instrument. Euen so is it not lawfull for vs to dispute blasphemously agaynst God, that of our selues, or of our owne power we haue done these workes, but only by the ayde, helpe and workmanship of his grace, by the which he rayseth and lyfteth vs vp to do any good deede, lyke as the Smyth doth his hammer to frame his worke, and by vs as his instrumentes he bryngeth to passe this his worke in vs. And therfore we are all bounde to render continuall thankes to almyghtie God, with all the humilitie and meekenesse we be able, that he vouchsaueth to vse vs as his instrumentes in the doyng of these good workes, whereas yf it so had pleased his goodnesse, he myght and were able to worke the same by any other, and peraduenture so much the more fruitefully, as those other myght be more apt, redy, and pliaunt to the execution of the work

of

of God shall we be. But whan a man hath with this consideration, in all humilitie detected hym selfe in the syght of the maiestie of God, it is further very necessarie, that he do diligently examine and weygh with hym selfe, what it is that he intendeth to require of God in his supplication and prayer, lest perhappes his requeste be hurtefull vnto hym selfe, and such a petition no man ought to loke for at Gods hande. For almightie God who is of his owne nature most gracious and well wyllyng to man, can not graunt to his beseacher and suppliaunt his suite and request, where as it is knowen vnto his diuine wysedome, that the same shalbe hurtfull and perylous vnto hym that requireth the same. And we be assured that God knoweth all those thynges aswell that be or maye be hurtfull vnto vs, as those that be or may be expedient and profitable, before we require the same. And therefore we do not at all tymes obteyne of GOD the thynges whiche we do requyre, specially whan he seeth that our requestes

requestes tende to our owne hurte and destruction. There is also a thirde thyng required to obteyne this fruite afore-said, that is to say, that the thyng whiche we require of God, appertayne vnto our selues. For albeit that we be bounde to pray for our neyghbours, yet are we not alwayes hurde when we praye in that sort, and specially as touchyng the fruite which we owe be in hande withall: for that man for whō we require any thyng at the hande of God, is perhappes eyther vnworthy to receiue that grace and fauour from God, or els the thyng it selfe is nothyng necessary for his owne health and well doyng. Nouertheles, yf for those causes we do not obteine the thyng which we require, yet is not our prayer vtterly vnprofitable, nor wholly voyde of merite, for he can not but deserue well that prayeth so: Lyke as the Prophete Psal. 34. saith, Oratio mea in sinu meo conuertetur. My prayer (sayth he) shalbe turned agayne into myne owne bosome, which is as much as yf he had sayde: Euerylye my prayer which I make for others, yf it

profite

profite not them, yet shal it not be voyde of all fruite and commoditie, for I know that at the least it shall turne vnto mine owne merite, the profite therof shal come to me, and my prayer shall returne with gayne, into myne owne hart & bosome. Therefore yf the prayer of any man be grounded vpon the pyller of humilitie, & be exhibited vnto God, for his owne comfort, relieke & necessitie, and require nothyng hurtefull or vnconuenient for hym selfe, let hym proceede and go forwarde in the name of our Lorde God, whosoeuer he be thus affected, nothyng mistrushyng, but the thyng whiche he in this wyse humbly requireth, he shal graciously obteyne, nothyng mistrushyng I say, because Saint James doth promise so, saying: Postulet in fide, nichil bestitans & dabitur ei. Let hym (sayth he) require in a faith not wauerying nor doutfull, and his request shalbe graunted vnto hym. And lykewyse our Sauiour Christ in the Gospell sayth thus. Quicquid orantis, petitis, credite quia accipietis, & fiet vobis. What thyng soeuer ye

Iacob.ii.

Mar.xi.

require by prayer, beleue that ye shall obteyne it, and your desire shalbe performed. And nowe this shall suffise for the declaration of the seconde fruite of prayer, and howe and by what meanes we may obteyne the same.

¶ Of the thirde fruite of Prayer.

THE thirde fruite of prayer we haue before noted to be a certaine spiritual sweetnesse and pleasure, wherwith our minde is delyghted in the tyme of our prayer, of the whiche fruite whosoeuer desireth to be partaker, must of necessitie not onlye haue charitie, humilitie, & the other meanes before spoken of, but he must also be marueylous attentyue vnto the prayer he is in hande withall, and not permit his mynde and imagina-

imagination to wander abroade to any thyng from the matter of his prayer. And albeit this diligent attentyuenesse be necessary and expedient for any man that desireth to enioye the other two fruites of his prayer, that is to say, merite and the obteynyng the thyng duely and lawfully required: yet may it suffise towardes the gettyng of eyther of those, if the mynde of hym that prayeth were earnestly bent in the begynnyng & fyll entrie into his prayer, so as he do not afterwarde by his owne wyll and purpose diuert his mynde, & suffer it to wander from his prayer. For if in the very firste begynnyng of prayer, a mans mynde be both wyllyng and studious to attende wholly therevnto, although afterwarde it be by frayltie ledde asyde, or by a certeyne obliuious negligence withdrawen from that former entente and action, it shall not therefore lose the fruites and commodities whereof before we haue spoken, but by the effectuall intent and assured purposed determination, in the begynnyng of his prayer, he

maye

may obteyne both the fruite of merite, and also the thyng he requireth. The which thyng shall more playnly appeare by the example whiche we wyll nowe geue forth vnto you. If any man haue a purpose to throwe a stone to an appoynted place, it is not of necessitie that the hande of hym that throweth, shoulde continually folowe with the stone: but the power and strength of the first throw whiche in the begynnyng the hande of hym that threwe gaue vnto the stone, shalbe sufficient to bring the stone to his appoynted place. And veryly it chaunceth not muche vnlyke in a man that prayeth, and as it were, throweth his prayers vnto God for hym selfe. It shall surely suffise, if he be attentyue and hartyly bent, euen at the begynnyng therof, so as he haue than a desire and purpose to continue in the same vnto the ende, and he shall doubtlesse, notwithstandyng the wanderyng awaye of his mynde, obteyne both the two fruites aforenamed. But he that desireth the thirde fruite, that is to say, to be refresh-

ed

ed with spirituall sweetenesse, comforte, and consolation, it shall not be sufficient for hym to haue his mynde (as hath ben before sayde) gathered together attent and wholly vacant vnto his prayer in the begynnyng of the same, but he must nedes persever and continue in the same attentyue diligence from the begynnyng vnto the ende, neuer diuertyng his mynde to any other thyng, nor suffryng the same to be withdrawen frō the continuall seruice which he is nowe in hande withall: but onlye direct the inwarde syght and force of his mynde vpon hym vnto whom he prayeth. And therefore it shalbe very conuenient and necessarie for hym that is desirous to taste of this spirituall delectation and sweetenes of prayer, before he begyn to praye, to clense his owne mynde, and voyde alwayes all vayne and fruitefulle thoughtes, phantasies, and imaginations, and to pray diligentlye with the vigilat courage of his soule, yea and bende all the force and strength of his mynde, and as muche as he is able, ioyne them

together

together and fasten them vnto GOD, least that in the continuaunce of prayer, by the meanes of some light negligence, his mynde be caryed away to the imagination and thinking of other straunge and inconuenient thynges. And therefore for this cause the olde fathers of the Church of Chryste, beynge endowed with greate vertue and holynes of lyte, as ofte as they were mynded to praye, they went forthwith in hande to gather theyr myndes together, and by dyuers meanes to styrre vp deuocyon in them, sometyme praying vppon theyr knees, sometome beyng alone, lying prostrate vpon the grounde, sometyme extendyng forth theyr armes in maner of the crosse of Chryst. And now and than exaltyng theyr handes vp towardes the heauens, sittyng in the meane tyme solytary and musyng, talking most comfortably with God hym selfe, and deuoutly syngyng some himpne or other psalme. By these meanes and suche other as semed moste commodious vnto them, they vsed marueylous effectually to rayse vp them sel-

nes to contemplation and deuocion, so farre forth, that they very often tymes tasted of that supereexcellent, and in dede vnerpressable sweetnes. And suerly the only tast of this kynde of sweetenes exceedeth, without comparyson or exceppcyon, all the pleasures of this worlde. For this one thyng comprehendeth presently in it selfe, all kynde of pleasure and delyght, and is the fountayne and spryng of al maner of goodnes, with the which, what thynge els soeuer thou shalte compare, is vtterly nothyng, nor can be of any maner effect or moment. And that thyng verely is god hymselfe, who very often doth with a maruelous grace and fauoure shewe and presente hym selfe to them that with deuout contemplacion, seke and loke for hym. Of the which it folowyth, that whensoeuer that moste excellent goodnes is once tasted by the inwarde vnderstandynge of oure soule, a maruelous sweetnes is forthwith dispersed and felt through the whole mynde: so farre exceadynge all imagination of man, that no tounge

of

of man is able to expresse the same. But this delectation is neyther of all men, nor at all tymes attayned and felte, but only than when it may be moste conuenient and profitable. For lyke as the phisition doth not euer geue medicine as ofte as the pacient desireth, but forbeareth sometyme, attendyng a more opportunitie and better tyme, when he seeth he shall therewith do more good to the sicke man: Euen so assuredlye doth our moste mercyfull Lorde God dyffer sometyme to graunt this maner of spirituall consolation, vntyll a tyme more apt and conuenient, that is to say, when he knoweth that the gyft of this delectation and comfort shalbe more profitable vnto our soules, and procure and bryng more and greater fruite and commodi-tie vnto vs. And therefore many men although they do by continuall prayer call vppon God, to be refreshed with this spirituall sweetenesse: yet do they not so speedyly atteyne the same, as they do earnestly desire it, because almyghtie God, lyke a moste cunnyng and discrete

Phisition

Phisition, taryeth his owne tyme, more apte, meete, and beneficiall for vs. And that sometyme for these causes, least yf he shoulde at the fyrst geue eare and perfourme our requestes, we myght easyly thereupon eyther growe insolent and proude, or thinke that of our powers, we were able to obteyne this gyfte of grace so often as we our selues were wyllyng and desirous. And therefore God moste wysely differreth dyuers tymes the speedye expedition and dispatch of this sute and request, vntyll he see the mynde of him that prayeth deepely, and altogether humbled and substantially confyrmed in a good and vertuous purpose, and geuen diligently to apply him selfe to holy and godly exercises, so that beyng thus prepared, he may at the laste make him partaker of this comfortable consolation, with a greater gayne to him selfe, by the longer tarying before he receyue the same. And therefore to conclude briefelye, whosoeuer seeketh to be delyghted with the taste of this heauenly and spirituall comfort and sweetenes, he muste fyrst

The meanes to obteyne the gift of delectation in prayer.

1. fyrst and principally with all his power, humiliate and deiect himself, and esteeme him selfe nothing, nor worthy any thing, and vtterly vnworthy, vpon whom god shoulde bestowe, not onlye this great gyft of his grace, to obtayne the feelyng of this delectation, but also any other of his benefites, be it neuer so meane, or little, yea, of his owne desert, vnworthy the meate he eateth, and the grounde he go-
2. eth vpon. Secondaryly, he must kepe his tongue in a good staye, and due obedience, speake little, and delight more in silence, than in muche libertie of speache, except it be, eyther whan charitie enforseth, or vehement necessitie compelleth, or finally whan some commoditie is like therby to growe, eyther to him selfe, or to his neyghbour. Thirdly, by all meanes
3. he ought and must labour, as muche as to him is possible, to conserue and kepe freshe in his mynde, the continuall remembraunce of God, set hym before his eyes, and thinke that he is alwayes present, redy to beholde and iudge al that he
4. shall commit or do. Moreouer let him as often

often as he can, renewe the memory and remembraunce of the incarnation of our Lorde and Saviour Jesus Christ, together with all the processe and continuall action of his life, and than let hym inculcate and imprint fast in his hart, the religious and thankefull memorye of his bitter death and passion, addyng to this, the consideration and often meditation to the heavenly glory, whiche the Aungels and sanctified soules, enioy nowe by the gyft of God with hym. Finally, at all tymes as muche as may be, eschewyng all vayne, frivolus, and unfruitfull thoughtes, that cumber and disturbe the minde from the beholdyng of those heavenly contemplations. But alas, howe wretched be we, that many tymes prevent these godly meditations, and before hand occupie our mind (so superexcellent a creature of God) not onlye with these unprofitable, but also extreme pestilent & hatefull thoughtes, whereas the remembraunce of those thinges beforesaide, is far more profitable, an occupation much more delectable, & finally, a studie muche

more excellent, than can be otherwyse in this lyfe frequented by man. For it sheweth (as it were) vnder a certayne dym or darke cloude, the perye bryghtnes, beautie, and felicitie of heauen, and is as a sparke of the beatitude to come, and finally, an assured pledge and token of the lyfe euerlastyng. And yf there be any man that worthyly may be called happy and blessed in this mortall lyfe, it is verye onlye he that earnestlye occupieth hym selfe in the remembraunce of the thynges aforesayde, and hath geuen hym selfe holly ouer to prayer, deuotion, and contemplation. But forasmuche as we haue nowe sufficientlye spoken of these three fruites and commodities, growing to man by prayer, let vs nowe frame our speache somwhat to the declaration of the maner of prayer, and howe and in what sort it ought to be vsed.

¶ The

¶ The thirde part of this booke, intreating of the maner of praying.

AND to the intent we may the more easyly vnderstande, what is the moste conuenient maner of prayer, it shalbe very necessary to knowe perfectlye, and marke diligently these three thynges, whereof we haue nowe to speake.

The maner of prayer, consisteth chiefely in three thinges.

The fyrst whereof is this, to what thyng we ought chiefely to attende in the tyme of our prayer, whether to the wordes we speake, to the sense of the wordes spoken, or rather to the person of hym, vnto whom we do speake and direct our prayer. The nexte is, of what shortnes or length our prayer ought to be. The thirde and last, whether it be more profitable to pray onlye with the mynde, or to vtter with the tongue, the prayer conceyued in the mynde. Surely if these three thynges be well knowen,

1.

2.

3.

tryed, and examined by vs, it shalbe very manyfest and easyly to iudge and perceyue, what kynde of prayer ought to be esteemed moste excellent and most fruitfull. And therefore we wyll with diligence search out somthing for the explanation of euery of those three thynges, that is to say: wherunto we ought to intende our myndes in prayer, howe long or short our prayer ought to be, and how we ought to pronounce and vtter the same.

¶ To vvhat thing vve ought chiefly to bende our minde in the time of our prayer.

First let vs discusse this, whether the force of our myndes be to be directed to the wordes, the sense of the wordes, or to him we vtter the wordes vnto. And to this first we say, that yf a man were of such dexteritie and redynes that he

he could attende all those thynges toge-
ther in his prayer, so as the heede takyng
eyther to the wordes, or the meanyng of
the wordes, shoulde nothyng slacke his
diligent and attentiue mynd to god hym
selfe, that maner of prayer, were doubt-
lesse moste excellent and beneficiall. But
because it can scarcely be possible that a
man in earnestly heedyng and inten-
ding one of these, shall not negligently
omit and forget the other, let vs there-
fore particularly inquire of euery one,
whiche is the better, more necessary, and
more fruitefull. And amongest these,
there is no man that diligently conside-
reth the thing, that can or nede to doubt,
but that the attention whiche is directed
vnto GOD hym selfe, is the chiefe and
moste meritorious, so that all other thin-
ges be agreeyng vnto the same, that is,
if that same prayer directed vnto God, be
in no wise more negligēt than the other,
whiche is intended eyther to the wordes
or meaning. And we minde that this vn-
derstanding be accepted & taken, not only
in such prayers as a man appoynteth to

hym selfe, of his owne wyll and choise, but likewyse in all other, whereunto we be bounde by the ordinaunce of the Church. And surely many there be of so weake and scrupulous myndes, that beyng in feare to escape or misse one worde or sillable in saying theyr appoynted seruice and prayers, bende all the power of their myndes, to expresse the wordes, truely, playnely, and distinctly. But those men (as I thinke) neede or very rarely fall of the superstitions of deuotion and prayer, for the whiche cause chiefely our forefathers of the Churche, dyd appoint those canonicall prayers, as we vse to call them. For those olde and holy men, specially had respect vnto this: And this was theyr most earnest purpose and paynefull study, by the saying of those vertuous, godly, and deuoute prayers, to styre vp the myndes of the Pastors, who shoulde be the meanes betweene God and the people, to the contemplation of God hym selfe, and so to the true loue of hym. And therefore if a man be so attentiue and diligent in vttering the wordes

of

of prayer, that he neyther regarde nor obserue the scope and ende whiche the holy fathers (whan they ordayned those prayers) iudged and determined chiefely to be considered, I may in no wise allow or commende this maner of prayer, eyther as chiefe, or more fruitefull than the others. And yet would I not that others, whiche contrarywyse so rashely runne ouer the prayers appoynted, that scarsely they can vnderstande them selues for haste, neyther regardyng the superercellencie of hym, to whom they pray, neyther yet imagining of any further sense and meaning of the wordes they speake, I woulde not (I say) that those shoulde make my speache before, any maner of colour of defence for theyr errours and abuses. For I speake it not with that minde to mislike or condemne them that regarde the wordes they speake, who I knowe do obserue and fulfyll the lawe and order: but to this ende, to perswade vnto those a more excellent maner of prayer, and therewith more fruitfull. It may be also, that those which are chiefly

attentiue to the sense and meanyng of their prayer, do sometymes receyue therby consolation of that spirituall pleasure and sweetenes. But (as I thinke) they taste not the very true and sincere delectation, whiche groweth by a certayne vnion and perfect agreement, by the conjunction and ioynyng together of our soules with almightie God. And yet it may be, that we may be brought vnto this vnion by some comfortable text or exposition of the scriptures, & at the last into the very bowels and secretes of that perfect and true delight. But that pleasure whiche groweth onlye of the scriptures, is much more faynte and nothyng so aboundaunt or full, as that whiche floweth directly from the spring of the godhead it selfe. For the scripture albeit it did proceade from God, yet is it a creature. And what creature so euer possesse our mindes, be it neuer so excellent, so as it be not God hymselfe, that same standeth betwene God and vs, insomuch that it is an impediment vnto our mindes, that we be not ioyned eucn face to face

face, and perfectly coupled with God him selfe. And by that meane, mintcheth the pure and sincere delectation, whiche is drawen from the fountaine it self. Therfore albeit those that applye theyr myndes to the sense of theyr prayers, do somtymes feele a certayne spirituall comfort, yet be they farre from that absolute sweetenes, of the whiche I haue spoken before, whereof no man can talk, but he that thynketh in his prayer of God only, and hath no kinde of abiect betwene God and his soule, but is euen coupled, fastened, and vnited with God hym selfe. The whiche is obtayned, whan a man (leauing and forsaking the imagination of euery other thyng, ouerpassyng all representations and false shewes of worldly creatures) occupieth his mynde with none other thyng, than with the consideration and contemplation of GOD himselfe, and than is he nearest and moste surelyest ioyned vnto God, vnto whom, whan he shall feele his harte sweetely to be fastened and fyrmely to cleaue, than groweth the sensible

Howe the sweetenes in prayer is obteyned.

sensible taste and feeling of that supreme delectation and comfort, whiche he only knoweth, whom God hath graunted to taste the same. But marke and remember this, that the imagination whiche our mynde frameth to it selfe of GOD, must neyther be subiecte to colour, light, figure, or briefly any worldly or corporal shape, for all those thynges beyng creatures, are playnely beside God. And we seeke to ioyne our selues with God and nothyng els, beside him. And therefore if a man wyll ryghtly thinke of God him selfe, let his mynde ouerrunne all worldly creatures, and conceiue him only alone whiche is highest, best, most excellent, most mightie, and him that without exception, doth vnspeakeably exceede all other thinges. If thou canst this do, than thinke the same to be present with thee, and yet without imagination eyther of colour, lyght shape, or fourme whatsoeuer, and than hast thou ryghtly thought of God. In whiche worke and busynes, yf thou be paynefull, and wyll diligently exercise thy selfe, than shalt thou

thou surely at the last attayne to the sensible taste and feelyng of that vnspeakable pleasure, and so shalt thou at once obtayne all the three fruites of thy prayer. But yet yf this maner and forme of doyng, seeme at the beginning harde and vneasie to any man, let him fyrst exercise him selfe in thinking and contemplation of Jesus Christ, who besydes his humanitie is also very God. Let hym lyft vp the strength of his minde towardes him, as beyng very God, remembryng his incarnation, his bytter paynes and crucil death, and therewith the glory which he nowe ineffably enioyeth in heauen, sitting on the ryght hande of the Maiestie of his father. He that will diligently applye his minde to this, or any other more apte or fruitefull meditation of God, shal at the last fall from the corporall imagination of Christ in his humaine nature, and shall ascende and aspire to the spirituall contemplation of his godhead, as hath ben beforesayde. And this truely is the very next way for any man, to attayne to the fruition of the perfect and

pure

pure delectation and absolute consolation in God. But yf we do not at the fyrst get the taste of this sweetenes, god withdrawing the same and keping it from vs, eyther for that he seeth, that it, at that tyme shall litle profite vs, eyther for that our prayer is but colde and vnfruitefull, and we in consideration of the dignitie and great worthynes of the thyng not sufficiently attentive and diligent, yet be we sure that we can not loose the fyrst fruite, which is the merite folowing our good mynde and fact of prayer. The best than and most pure and perfect maner of prayer, shalbe for any man, after that he hath gathered his mynde together, & directed the force of his soule vpon god himselfe, as beyng veryly present, to offer to him with all the affection possible of his hart, those prayers whiche he mindeth to say, whether he vnderstand them or not, and to insinuate and fasten him selfe as firmely as he can vnto him. And if he go forward and continue in this trade, that is to say, yf beyng once fired on God, he wander not astray any other wher from

God,

God, he shall profite muche more in the loue of God, whiche is the true ende of prayer, than yf he were neuer so attent eyther to the wordes or sense of his wordes without the other. For this firing of the mynde vppon God, hath many times a companion and folower, such an elenation of the hart, that the mynde berye oftentymes forgettyng all earthly thynges, knoweth not where he is, euen as though it were strayed from it selfe, yea, and somtymes there foloweth suche a motion of the spirite, that before a man beware, he cryeth out, and doth dyuers thynges, that afterwardes he neyther knoweth, nor doth remember, because the spirit and power of God do so mightylye worke in hym, that he hath no power to withdraw himself from such motions, as the same inspireth vnto hym. And as very many of the olde holye fathers, whiche were ryght cunnyng and perfect in this art, do testifie that there is felt many tymes such sweetenes & delectation in prayer, that it ouerfloweth the soule, and maketh the flesh of our bodies

partaker

partaker of the same ioye and delight, and is nowe made in suche estate, that it feeleth a delectation meruelous, & suche as it neuer talked before, whiche thyng is affirmed by the Prophet Dauid, sayings Cor meum & caro mea, exultauerunt in deum viuum. My hart and my flesshe haue reioysed together in God, the auethour and geuer of lyfe. As though he woulde haue sayd, my soule by the goodnes of the spirite of God, hath conceyued in it self, so meruelous a delyght in god, that by the great delectation therof, euen my flesshe is also replenished and watered ouer and ouer, wherein it hath so reioysed, that it could not refrayne or staye it selfe from expressyng and shewyng forth the pleasure whiche it had receyued. And surely this delectation is a very sparkell or glimering resemblaunce of the euerlasting life, whiche all good men shall haue after the generall resurrection of theyr bodyes. For than shall the glory of the soule so farre excede and abounde, that it shall runne ouer into the bodyes, and than shall both as well body as soule be fulfilled

Psal. 83.

fulfylled and satisfied with the plentifull abounduaunce of that vnspeakable pleasure. And therefore as touchyng this firste question, it maye appeare by that which hath ben saide, that the chiefe and specialll thyng to be regarded in prayer, is, to haue our myndes so fixed on God, vnto whom we make our prayers, as though we esteemed hym euen nowe present with vs, and so embrace the continuall remembraunce of hym, kepyng hym before the eyes of our hartes without any maner declynyng from hym. And albeit this shal seeme in the first begynnyng of this exercise harde & paynefull, yet shall it by vse and processe of tyme proue more pleasaunt and delightfull, specially to those soules whiche be any thyng inspired with the sweetenesse and good sauour of Jesus Christe. And nowe let vs drawe to the intreatyng of the seconde question.

Of what length our prayer ought to be.

NOw haue we to consider in this seconde place, of what length & contynuaunce our prayer ought to bee. For it may be eyther shorter or longer, but what shortnes or length is most expedient, that seemeth to appertayne and to be considered in the maner of prayer. And therefore it may be sayde, that albeit our Saviour Christ dyd geue the precepte to pray continually, yet ought not that so to be understanded, that we be bounde alwayes actually to pray, being beyond the possibilitie and the power of man. For the frailtie of mans nature doth not permit any man to be continually attentyue to prayer, eyther in wordes, eyther in hart, but he is inforced to alienate his mynde otherwyse. And yet dyd Christe truely admonyshe vs howe great

great necessitie followeth vs to praye (yf we were able, continually) forasmuch as no moment of tyme passeth, in the whiche we neede not of the ayde and helpe of God, and that assistaunce from God ought we incessauntlye to craue of hym, and begge it we must, albeit our weake nature can not continually persever in that action of prayer. And therfore the iudgement of the moste graue and learned writers, is, that our prayer shoulde so longe be continued, as it shoulde be auayable to the ende, for the whiche prayer was first ordeyned. For lyke as no medicine is ministred to the sicke man, in any greater quantitie than is thought sufficient for the ease and recouery of the pacient, which is thende of phisicke: euen so ought our prayer to be of so great length, as may suffise for the obteynyng the nerte ende therof. And the chiefe and nert ende of our prayer, for whiche it was ordeyned, is the feruencie of christian charitie, which is vndoubtedlye the health of our soules. For thole that want charitie, and be neither

hotte nor colde, God despiseth, before whom, in the Apocalippes, he preferreth those that be vtterly starke colde, saying: Vtinam calidus esses aut frigidus, sed quia tepidus es, incipiam te euomere. I woulde thou haddest ben eyther hotte or colde, but for that thou arte neyther of both, I wyll begyn (sayth God) to reiect thee and cast thee forth from the companie and felowshyp of good men. Lo than howe the mynde of God abhorreth those persons that be newters, and be neyther hotte nor colde. We must therefore endeuour our selues by all meanes to be feruent in charitie, for the kyndelyng of the whiche in vs, no doubt prayer is the most necessarie thyng. The whiche charitie beyng once gotten, we be encouraged therefullye to take in hande all doynges, which we trust shall please God, and for the doyng whereof, we shall by the goodnes and promyse of God, be rewarded with euerlastyng ioy and felicitie. And therefore our speciall endeuour in the tyme of our prayer, ought to be, that the feruent heate of charitie myght

be

be kyndeled in our hartes, and in suche sort shall it be conuenient to moderate the length of our prayer, so as that ende maye both be acquired and preserued in vs. And therfore whan we in our prayer do perceaue this feruentnes of mynde once kyndled in vs, by the weaknes and wearynes of our bodyes to ware colde & faynt, than is it tyme to cease frō prayer, and occupie our selues about some other vertuous exercise. For if we should so long continue, that the feruentnes of deuotion shoulde be vtterly extynguyshed in vs, we should not only not obteine the end which is sought for by our prayer, but we shoulde also geue no small occasion to procure the contrary. For some as by ouerlong continuyng in that dulnesse of prayer, the feruentnes therof & deuotion is once colde in our myndes, we do forthwith lose the inwarde consolation of our myndes, which the that feruencie of deuotion, not beyng vtterlye extynguyshed, wrought and preserued in vs, wherby it doth many tymes folowe that we wander abroade, seking some

sensible delectation and comfort of externall thynges, whiche most commonly inducethe a pernicious dissolution of the mynde, and by degrees drawoth it vnto such other euyls as be not conuenient, whiche woulde neuer haue chaunced, yf we had ceassed our prayer before the feruencie of deuotion had vtterlye ben extynguyshed. And therfore Saint Augustine doth much praise certayne Monkes in Egypt, which vsed very short, ether with very deuout & godly prayers. The religious people in Egipt (saith Saint Augustine) be noted to vse verye often prayers, but those very short and pithye, and (as it were) sodenly thrown from theyr hartes into the bosome of almyghtie God. And it appeareth, that this was the cause why they vsed so often prayers, because they woulde attentynes renue and kyndle agayne the fyre of deuotion in theyr hartes: But the cause why they vsed short prayers was only this, lest by length of prayer and tediousnes therein, feruent deuotiō before conceaued, might be dulled, cooled, & finally extynguished.

And

And therfore a man in prayer muſt ſpe-
cially labour and take heede, that when
God hath ſtirred kyndled that feruent de-
uotion in his hart, he by negligence ſuf-
fer not the ſame vtterly go out and dye.
But ſo long as the ſame may eyther be
increaſed or contynued, he ought not to
leaue of prayer, excepte eyther the great
weerysomenes of our bodyes, or ſome o-
ther lyke neceſſitie inforce vs. All here-
fore both the ſhortnes & length of prayer,
is to be ruled & meaſured, to and for this
ende aforelayde. For lyke as the phiſiti-
an, regardyng the ende of his cure, whi-
che is the recouery and health of his pa-
cient, doth temper his medicine, and mi-
niſtreth it to the ſicke, not in ſuch aboun-
dance as he myght do, but as by diſcre-
tion he ought to do, hauyng regard both
to the getting & contynuyng the health
to his patient: euen ſo, a man in prayer
muſt not labour to pray as much and as
long as he can ſpeake, but to continue
the length of his prayer as much as ſhal
be neceſſary & expedient eyther for to in-
creaſe or contynue his earneſt & feruent

deuotion. And therefore, whan in his prayer he perceaueth hym selfe by the vnion whiche he syndeth betweene God and his soule, to be swetely affected and pleasauntly kyndeled, let hym than proceede and go forwarde with toyfull sighynges and comfortable teares, fynishing the rest of his prayer, as the holy spirite of God shall, duryng his prayer, suggest matter into his harte. For as long as this heate of deuotion, once conceaued, endureth, I would not aduyse any man to leaue of prayer, excepte there be some other impediment, whiche maye be as muche or more to the honour of God, or to hym selfe that prayeth more necessary, or finally more profitable to his neyghbour. But assone as he perceaueth this feruent deuotion by the frayltie & weaknesse of his body to decay, than let hym content and satisfie hym selfe with the gaine and profite he hath alredy gotten, and leauyng prayer, turne hym selfe to some other good worke or occupation meete and agreable for his vocation, vntyll he finde a newe disposition rayse-

in hym selfe to pray, or some other newe
opportunitie to folowe the same. And as
often as he feeleth hym selfe stirred with
any newe affection to praye, let hym in
no wyse lose that motion, forasmuch as
he than may, by some dart of prayer, be
it neuer so short, penetrate the mercy of
almyghtie God. For inasmuche as that
affectiō (as we ought of reason to thinke)
is moued by the holy spirite of God, thou
mayst not refuse to accept, imbrace, and
folowe the same, except thou wylt shewe
thy selfe vnkynde and vnthankful to the
spirite of grace. And therefore (necessitie
excepted) al other businesse set aside, that
motion must earnestly be folowed, and
that scoolemaster of our soule diligently
serued, and the affection in no wyse to be
permitted to decay or perishe. But some
man wyll saye, howe is it possible that
any man which is conuersaunt amongst
the affayres and busines of this worlde,
shoulde in this sorte attende and applye
him selfe to prayer? He may, saith Saint
Chrisostome, and that very easylye, al-
though he were tyed in the market place

of all worldly busines, and stode in the iudicial place of worldlye iudgementes. For it is not the voyce (sayth Chrisostome) whiche is alwayes required, but the eleuation of the hart and contemplation of the mynde, neyther is the extention of the handes so much to be desired as the intention of the mynde. If thou haue thy mynde onlye feruentlye bent, thou hast than atteyned to the perfection of prayer. Hytherto Chrisostome. Thou mayst therfore pray in any place wheresoeuer thou be, yea albeit thou happen to be in company, thou mayest for some litle time withdraw thy selfe from them, and as it were by stealth offer vp vnto God some short prayer, as the Scripture saith: Aque furtiue sunt dulciores: Waters priuily stolen, be alwayes the swectest. And in very deede those prayers which be swyftly and secretely throwen vp into the sight of God, do replenyshe our myndes with much more abundant grace, & pearseth our hartes with a more feruent loue & desire towardes hym, and (as good mens experience teacheth) farr

Proverb. ix

more

more acceptable and pleasaunt vnto the most louyng spouse of the soule of man Jesus Christe, than any other kynde or maner of prayer can be. And if thou can by no meanes segregate thy selfe from them in whose company or seruice thou art, yet mayst thou at the least, euen remayning with them, lyft vp thy mynde to God, whose present assurance thou shalt not nede to doubt, and euen than, with a fewe wordes conceaued onlye in mynde, to knocke and cal vpon his mercie, saying with the Prophete: Intende in adiutorium, domine deus salutis meæ Psalm. 37. Harken vnto me and spedyly helpe me, O thou God of my health & saluation. Or thus. Deus in adiutorium meum intende. Psalm. 96. O God applye thy wyll to succour me. Which wordes Cassianus noteth to be very effectuall. And if thou doubtfully thynke these fewe wordes, thy prayer is doubtlesse euen than accepted. And such kynde of prayer maist thou vse & frequent whersoeuer thou be, as Thalassius me saith, whersoeuer thou remaine thou mayst there erect vnto thy selfe an

aulter

aulter and place of prayer, the place nothyng hyndereth, for a man that sytteth worckyng in his shoppe, maye thus dedicate his soule by prayer vnto almyghtie God, thus a seruaunt beyng occuppyed in the seruice of his maister may neuerthelesse pray, and this may any man do in the market place, this may he do in prison, yea and in the myddis of neuer so great a multitude, as Saynt Paul prayed in prison, Esayas in the myre or durth Ezechias turnyng hym selfe in his bedde towardes the wall, Daniell in the denne of the Lions, Jonas in the belly of the whale, the theefe on the crosse, and yet were they harde in few wordes, of God. This is the summe of Chrysostomes mynde, written by hym in diuers places of his workes. And therefore whosoeuer shall in this wyse from tyme to tyme exercyse hym selfe sometime praying, sometyme otherwyse, doyng well, alwayes trauaylyng eyther to obteyne, increase or norysshe the feruencie of charitie, neuer suffering (as farre forth as he is able) the fayre heate to waxe colde, or be extynguished

Gen. xvi. Jere. 38. Esay. 38. Dan. 9. & 14 Jonas. ii. Luk. xxiii.

tynguyshed by his faute, neither yet permittyng such good affections and godly motions, as the spirite of God shall suggest and inspire vnto his harte, vtterlye to peryshe, without any fruite of receauyng and folowyng them, that man doubtlesse shall at the laste attayne vnto a marueilous tranquilitie and quietnes, and a moste pleasaunt and quiet reste of his soule, & therwith vnto an vnspeakeable ioy of his mynde in the spirite of almyghtie God, which ioy, no doubt, doth without all comparyson, excell all the mirth, pleasures, pastymes, delyghtes, or ioyes of this worlde, whiche world is in deede no better than a very false scicophant, deceytfull iugler, and deluding enchaunter of our soules. But nowe let vs go in hande with the thirde question.

Whether

Whether the prayer of the hart onlye be more fruitefull than that wherin the mouth & hart also is occupied.

IT resteth nowe to be discussed, whether that prayer be more beneficiall to man, whiche hee maketh with his hart onlye, or that which is both uttered from his harte, and with his mouth. And here I make this protestation, that I do in no wyse purpose or intende any thyng to saye in the dispraysе or otherwyse, to the derogation of open prayer by wordes, whiche is eyther admitted by custome and the use therof, or appoynted by the ordinaunce of the Church, or enioyned vnto any man by penaunce, or by any meanes vowed, or in hart by promise taken in hand, whereby any man standeth bounde to resite & saye his prayers. But yet I do thynke that a man which is free from any such bonde,

bonde, and enioyeth full and perfecte li-
bertie in Christe, and is studious of the
moste pure & healthfull maner of prayer,
shalbe oftentimes more hyndered by the
continual vse of praying in wordes, than
by the exercyse of his hart alone, in ma-
kyng of his prayer vnto God. For as
Saint Augustine in an Epistle vnto
Proba wryteth of the fruite of prayer:
This worke is many tymes more per-
fectelye wrought by the syghyng of the
hart than by pronouncing of the mouth,
more effectuallye done by the inwarde
workyng, than by outwarde speakyng.
But if the worke of prayer be more per-
fectly perfourmed by the syghyng of the
harte, than with the vtteraunce of the
mouth, than must it needes folowe, that
the prayer of the harte, from the whiche
those syghynges breake forth, be more
profitable than the praying with the
mouth, wherby wordes only be vttered.
And that may of ryght be iudged, for as
S. Cipryan doth witnesse, God geueth
eare, not to the voyce of mans mouth,
but to the eye of his hart, nether is he to

Augustinus Epist. 121. Capi. 10.

Ciprianus de oratione dominica, Serm. 6.

be

be moued with wordes, which seeth all thoughtes. And therefore any simple poore man, which beyng with great humilitie prostrate to the grounde, lying lyke a moste vyle abiect, confessyng hym selfe a synner, openyng his owne miseries, and shewyng forth the most secrete griefes of his hart before the sight of god vttering no wordes at all, but onlye powryng forth abundaunce of teares and syghes of his harte, that man (no doubt) shall moste spedyly obteyne his request of God: which thyng dyd moste manyfestly appeare in Anna the mother of Samuell. For this Anna (as it is written in the first boke of the kinges) dyd moste earnestlye require of GOD, beyng barreyne, to haue a chylde, for the obteynyng wherof, she dyd frequent the Temple, and there by dayly prayer she continually craued the goodnesse of God, that in her requeste he woulde be gracious vnto her: And yet dyd she not frame her prayer in wordes, but onlye in her hart. For the Scripture testifieth, that she spake to God with her hart, and

1. Reg. 1.

and that no worde was harde that came from her, onlye her lippes moued. To conclude, by this her prayer (of hart I say, without speache outwardlye pronounced) she obtayned the thyng she required of God, and had a sonne, whiche she so greatly desyred, and had begged of GOD, with many sighes and aboundaunce of weppyng teares, and yet no wordes by her mouth vttered. Saint Jerome agreeth with this, expoundyng this place of Saint Mathewe.

Tu cum oraueris intra in cubiculum tuum, & clauso ostio ora patrum tuum. Math. vi.

When thou doest pray, enter into thy chaumber, and shuttyng faste thy doze, pray vnto thy heauenly father. It seemeth vnto me (sayeth S. Jerome) that this is rather a precept, that we keppyng secretly in the thought of our hartes, and hauyng our voyce suppressed with silence, shoulde so make our prayers vnto God, which we also reade in the booke of the kynges, that Anna dyd, where it is written that her lippes only moued, but no voyce was harde. This much Saint

Jerome wryteth. And surely this maner of prayer, doth vehemently moue the eares of the mercy of GOD, and doth mightyly bowe them spedyly to heare vs: Yea, and as Saint Paul witnesseth, the holy spirite of God, is the guide & the derectour of this maner of prayer, saying: Quid oremus sicut oportet nescimus: sed ipse spiritus postulat pronobis gemitibus in enarrabilibus. What we shoulde pray, as we ought to pray, we knowe not: but the spirite hymselfe maketh request for vs, with vnspeakeable mourninges and sighinges. The meanyng whereof is, that we do not sufficiently know in what maner we ought to demaunde any thyng of God, but the verye spirite of God inwardly rayſyng vp our hartes, maketh vs with vnspeakeable mone and intercession to require of God, that thing whiche is moste profitable for vs. And yet do I not deny, but that any deuoute man may ryght well begin his prayer as he lyst, with wordes pronounced by his mouth, but so soone as he shall perceyue his hart to be any thyng

Rom. viii.

shing kindled and inspired with a sweete delectation comming from the spirite of God, than shall it be moste commodious to him, leauyng his prayer in wordes, to folowe and geue heede to the leadyng of the spirite of God, and with silence to yelde hymselfe wholly to his direction and order. For as I haue said a little before, thende which we ought to appoint vpon in prayer, is specially the feruentnes of charitie, by the whiche at the laste our mindes be kyndled, whan with moste diligent prayer, our hartes be strongly rayſed, and our myndes be highly lyfted vp vnto the beholding of god. And therfore whensoeuer we maye perceyue our selues to haue atteyned vnto this ende, than muste we apply al our endeuour and diligence, that as muche as may be, the same be continued in vs, whiche thyng shal doubtlesse much better proceede, by the guiding & operatiō of the holy spirit, than by any wordes vttered by our neuer so great industry & diligence. And therefore we muste now with al our power folowe the motion & dryuing of the spirite

of God, whyther soeuer it wyll leade vs, and so nede not to vtter any mo wordes.

A similitude aptly applyed.

In lyke maner as yf a man, whan after muche trauaile, he hath passed the seas, and hath obtayned harborowe and his desired hauen, leauyng his shyppe whiche brought him to the hauen, intendeth nowe to thende and purpose for the which he arriued, and thinketh nowe no more of his ship. Euen so verily, he that by the vse of pronounced prayer, as by a meane, is caryed into the inwarde consolation of the minde, and commeth to the spirituall feruencie in God, ought nowe to haue his principall care and study bent on this, that this heate in no wyse ware colde, and leauyng nowe the prayer of the mouth, he must followe the spirite of God, the minister of this feruent deuotion, whyther soeuer it doth dryue hym. And nowe let hym not vse any more his owne wordes, but onlye those whiche be suggested inwardly in the hart by that holy spirite of God, and let him aske that of God with vehement and feruent deuotion of mynde, without any pronun-

tiation

tiation or sounde of wordes. But to the ende thou mayest more playnely & assuredly perceyue, that this maner of prayer, whiche is done by the spirite and minde, is much more excellent, than that whiche is vttered in wordes, heare what our Sauiour Christ sayeth in ỹ Gospell: Spiritus est deus, & qui adorant eum in spiritu & veritate oportet adorare. God is a spirite, and they that adore him, must adore him in spirite and trueth. Lo, as God is a moste spirituall thyng, euen so requireth he a moste spirituall sacrifice. And therefore that prayer is more gratefull vnto hym, whiche is offered by the spirit and the minde, than the only grosse vtteraunce of the voyce, whiche can not be framed without the bodyly breath. And let not this moue the, that Adorare, is named in that place, and not Orare, for the one of them shall neuer well be without the other, but whan God is prayed vnto, than is he also adored, and whan he is adored, he is also prayed vnto. And therefore God wylbe intreated with spirite and mynde of the moste chosen and

John.iiii.

excellent myndes, whiche be moste spiri-
tuall, and desireth, such as in his Gospell
he noteth, to honour and adore hym in
spirite and trueth. Wherfore I nothing
doubt, but many godlye and spirituall
men (whiche haue diligentlye exercised
them selues in prayer, and haue accusto-
med dayly to eleuate theyr hartes vnto
GOD, and haue at some tymes tasted
and conceiued the sweetenes of that fer-
uent affection) haue much more profited
by that prayer of their hart, than yf they
had sayd an endlesse numbre of prayers
and Psalmes with theyr mouth, whiche
thyng some do, ouerchargyng theyr
mindes, yea, and rather excluding them
selues from the very ende of prayer, for
that in that case, they can neuer be able
to tast the spirituall sweetenes of perfect
praier. And out of doubt, that desyre and
trauayle to perfourme the saying of so
great a number of Psalmes, doth many
tymes hynder and turne away the gra-
tious visitation of God from the hartes
of them that labour in them, whiche
otherwyse he would willingly and redy-

lye

lye exhibite vnto them. For lyke as the sonne doth euery way disperse and spreade abrode the beames of his lyght, euen so is God redye on euery syde, to powre forth vpon vs the sweetenes of his grace and goodnes, except by suche lettes and hinderaunces, all excesse and entry to our myndes be stopped, and the way hidden from vs, as it were with a thicke & darke miste. For he that desireth to be partaker of that sweetenes, maye in no wyse geue heede to any other thyng whatsoeuer it be, but attende only and wholly to God hymselfe, yea, and that withall his harte. But those other attende neuer a whit to God, but onlye regarde howe to vtter out those numbre of wordes, which they minde to say: Neither do thei cõsider the present Maiestie of god, but only how they may most speedyly runne ouer their number of psalmes, with the care wherof, they do so occupie and ouercome theyr myndes, that no drop of heauenly sweetenes, can in any wise enter into them. And yet do thei thinke & perswade themselues, that by so doing they shall specially please

A similitude declaryng the redye assistence of God in Prayer.

God, and can not be quiet or satisfied in conscience, vntill they haue by one way or other, ouerrunne and finished that huge number of Psalmes. Yea, and yf they chaunce by forgetfulnes to pretermit any part vnsayde of that (I meane not which the Churche appoynteth to be sayde) but whiche they of theyr owne wyll haue taken in hande to say, they fynde theyr conscience greuously therewith offended, wherewith they be miserably tormented, and theyr hartes tome and rent. Whose men truely do not sufficiently waygh the saying of S. Jerome, whiche is this, that the saying or singing of fiue Psalmes with a pure and sincere hart and spirituall ioy and gladnes, is more worth than the whole Psalter, ouerrun with an vnquiet and troubled mynde. And yet is it more meruayle that they heare not, or at the least marke not Christ himselfe in the Gospell, geuyng admonition and instructing suche as pray, not to bende theyr labour to speake much, saying in this wyse: Orantis, nolite multum loqui. When ye pray, do ye not speake muche, not to this

Math. vi.

ende,

ende, that by those wordes it were to be vnderstanded or thought that Christ mislyked a long continued prayer, whereas we reade that he himselfe continued very long in prayer: But he would not in any wyse, that we shoulde put a vayne trust in a number of wordes, by one waye or other made vp and multiplyed, specially whan they vtterly wanted all deuoute affection of the minde, and that we should not hope that he would sooner be moued, with a multitude of wordes, than with a well affected mynde. For God is muche more inclyned to heare our petitions by the onlye feruent affection of the harte, than by neuer so great a number of wordes pronounced without suche affection. For the whiche cause Saint Augustine sayeth thus. It is one thyng to speake much, and farre an other to be much and well affected. It is one thing (sayeth he) to continue speach long, and much another to continue deuotion long. That man speaketh much to God, that thinketh his mercy is to be wonne with a numbre of wordes onlye. But truely he vseth not

to

to be moued with the multitude of speach, but with the quantitie and aboundaunce of deuotion and godly affection. And the bare sounde of wordes pronounced by the lippes only, maketh a very dull sounde in his eares. But the feruent and vehement affection of the mynde, doth quickely and speedyly penetrate them, and that because God is muche more delyghted with our godly affection, then with our bare prayer, and specially whan that affectiō being accompanyed with feruent sighes & aboundaūt teares, do pearse the heauens. Truelye that maner of prayer, if God were (in a maner) vnprorable, woulde ouercome him to mercy, and be he neuer so omnipotent, wyll binde him to graunt our lawefull desires. And surely the same prayer, is muche rather framed and perfected in the spirite & mynde of man, and so sooner presented vnto God, than by any wordes that mans mouth is able to perfourme or expresse. For the spirite and soule of man, beyng once quickened and kindeled with the feruent fyre of deuotion, much sooner dispatcheth

dispatcheth his intent and purpose, than any motion of the lippes, or framed prayer of the mouth were able to do, whiche thing (yf none other) maketh apparaunt the thing wherof we haue so long intreated, that is to say, the prayer of the minde and soule onlye, to be more excellent and better, than the praier of the mouth: forasmuche as both the motion of the lippes is very slowe, and the corporall weyght of the tongue, vttering forth his wordes, not so apt to followe the quickenes of the spirite, and also muche hynderaunce foloweth by openyng and shuttyng the mouth, so that they can not in any wyse, serue the swift motion of the soule and mynde, and speciallye at suche tyme, as the mynde is inflamed, and deuotion feruentlye kyndeled therein. For in that case, it is caryed with suche a swyftnes, that the fleshelynes of the mouth, tongue, and lyppes, can in no wyse followe it: And yf they shoulde, yet do they bryng no benefite to the spirite, but onlye a wayght and heauye burthen. And therefore I woulde admonyshe all suche as delight

delight in prayer, and willingly studye to serue God therewith, and specially suche as haue leysure to attende the same, and to bestowe very much of theyr tyme therin, that they do not vnprofitably ouerlode themselues with to many wordes in prayer, but that they woulde from henceforth dayly bestowe so muche tyme in kyndlyng theyr myndes, in cathynge theyr thoughtes and affections vpon God, and in the receyuing his merciefull visitation, into the bowels of theyr hartes, as they haue spent selfe fruitfully heretofore, in ouerrunnyng a multitude of wordes with small consideration or weyghing of them, to the ende that by this meane, they may at the laste obteyne and come vnto the taste and feeling of that vnspeakable sweetenes, whiche thing surely they shall attayne vnto, yf they first do worthyly prepare them selues in suche sort, as we haue shewed before, and than do humblye offer theyr myndes in the syght of God, and finally apply theyr carefull studye and intent, to perfourme and finishe theyr prayer, with all attention and diligence

gence of theyr hartes. And yet they shall do well to begin with vocall prayer, and specially with suche, whereby they haue founde them selues before moste easyly kyndled and inflamed to deuotion, and the other contemplation of theyr soules. But whan after theyr begynnyng a whyle, they shall perceyue them selues inflamed and sweetely affected with the inspiration and mercyfull visitation of the spirite of God, and pleasauntly drawen towardes his heauenly presence, than leauing to vtter or pronounce their prayer, let them folowe the leadyng of the holy spirit of God in them, and than let them labour in the silent prayer of theyr mynde, with compunction of hart, sighing, and teares, crauyng onlye those thinges of God, whiche his spirite shall put them in mynde of: And chiefely to begge of God the continuall presence of his grace, so that he forsake them not, but that it maye please hym to graunt those thynges vnto them, whiche his wisedome knoweth and seeth to be most expedient and profitable for them. And

surely

surely yf they do persist and continue in this trade and fourme aforesayde, they shall not only be vnto God, dayly more and more gratefull and acceptable, but they shall also proceede dayly more and more, in the increase of feruent charitie, and shalbe made lyke vnto the heauenly and Angelicall mindes, which dayly beholde the presence of God. For what cause is there (although they remayne here in earth, and be couered with the vessell of mortall and corruptible flesshe) why they shoulde not be called moste lyke vnto the Angelles, whan their prayer is lyke vnto the prayer of the Angelles? That is to say, they pray in soule and mynde, and taste in their soules the lyke sweetenes as the Angelles do, yea, and do perceyue and feele within themselues the pledge and assuraunce of the felicitie to come, whiche the Angelles nowe alredy do enioye: So as they do nowe want nothyng of the absolute resemblaunce vnto the Angelles, but only the fruition of the ioyes and glory to come, whiche so soone as they be rid out

of

of the wandering pylgrymage and mi-
serie darkenes of this worlde, they shall
enioy in heauen, with an assured
certaine fruition and vn-
aduoydable possession
whiche after shall
neuer fayle
them.

FINIS.

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